

Foreign and Defence Policies and Policy Making
in the Australian Labor parties, 1916-30.

by

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Abbreviations

ACL	Anti-Conscription League.
AFL	Australian Freedom League.
AIF	Australian Imperial Force.
AJPH	Australian Journal of Politics and History.
ALF	Australian Labor Federation.
ADHS	Armidale and District Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings.
AMIEU	Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union.
AO	Australian Outlook.
APA	Australian Peace Alliance.
APLE	Australian Political Labor Executive.
AQ	Australian Quarterley.
AUDC	Australian Union of Democratic Control.
AW	Australian Worker.
AWU	Australian Workers' Union.
BIC	Brisbane Industrial Council.
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates.
CPE	Central Political Executive.
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers.
CYB	Commonwealth Year Book.
DC	District Council.
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.
IVC	Industrial Vigilance Council.
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World.
ILO	International Labor Office.
ML	Mitchell Library.
NCC	No-Conscription Council.
NLA	National Library of Australia.
OBU	One Big Union.
PLC	Political Labor Council.
PLL	Political Labor League.
PLP	Parliamentary Labor Party.
QCE	Queensland Central Executive.
RAHS	Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society.
RILU	Red International of Labor Unions.
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald.
THC	Trades Hall Council.
TLC	Trades and Labor Council.
TLF	Tasmanian Labor Federation.
TWPL	Tasmanian Workers' Political League.
TUC	Trades Union Congress.
ULP	United Labor Party.
Uncat.	Uncatalogued.
UTLC	United Trades and Labor Council.
VSP	Victorian Socialist Party.
WPA	War Precautions Act.
WPO	Workers' Political Organisation.

A Note on Terms

The title 'Australian Labor Party' was adopted for use at the 1908 federal conference of the state parties, but, up until the First World War years, was not commonly employed. State Labor parties retained their names adopted upon foundation in the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth centuries. These were as follows:

NSW	Political Labor League.
Victoria	Political Labor Council
Queensland	Queensland Labour Party.
South Australia	United Labor Party.
Western Australia	Australian Labor Federation.
Tasmania	Tasmanian Workers' Political League.

At the 1917 state conference of the PLL in Sydney it was decided to call for adoption of a common party name: Victorian and South Australian state parties complied at their own subsequent state conferences that year, but it was not until a decision was made at the 1918 federal conference in Perth that all agreed to adopt the same style. Hereafter they were titled ALP, followed by the name of the state branch.

Other differences in nomenclature persisted; Labor state executives were known either by that name, or as central executives, executive committees, etc. Similarly, state conferences were also called conventions or congresses and organised union bodies were either Trades and Labor Councils, Trades Hall Councils or Industrial Councils. For the sake of consistency I have employed the term ALP to refer to the national embodiment of all six state branches, the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, the federal conference, federal executive and federal platform. State Labor parties have been specifically identified as such and as a convenience terms like state conference and state executive have been generally adopted for ordinary use; for the same reason I have preferred to use the one spelling of Labor throughout.

A number of antonyms require further definition. Conservative and radical are used to refer to political attitudes and policies of protagonists to the issues; militant and moderate refer to the type of

action pursued, while revolutionary and reformist concern attitudes to the social system as a whole. All are relative terms: it is hoped that the intended meanings are apparent from their context. Finally, the Labor movement is taken to broadly involve all Labor organisations and groups combined, including the parliamentary-political wing, trade union-industrialist wing and other formally or informally affiliated bodies of sympathetic conviction.

PREFACE

This is a study in the formation of policy in the Australian Labor Party on the closely connected subjects of defence and foreign relations from prior to the first World War until 1930. Broadly, the era selected divides into three sections. In 1908 the basic principles of Labor defence policy were established to ensure the protection of the nation as a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire and were implemented up until the war by Labor governments and non-Labor governments, with whom there was very little difference in approach. Secondly there was a period in which key alterations were made as a result of experience during the war followed by their assimilation by the party in the following decade and eventual reconciliation with the needs of government. Party policy is taken to be represented primarily in a constantly evolving document, the ALP federal platform binding all members as the democratically expressed wishes of the majority. In addition to the platform two other dimensions can be taken into account - electoral undertakings and public pronouncements by party leaders and the performance of the federal party when in office.¹ The last is especially important but applies only during 1908-9, 1910-13 and 1914-16 or a period of six years out of the two decades selected, but encompassing the first great disastrous clash between the federal Labor leadership and substantial sections of the movement over platform issues. The Great War then dominates the study.

Historically, defence and foreign policies have been recurrent and often intractable issues in the ALP and were more persistent causes of disagreement than practically any others.² They were never more so than during the first World War which divided the nation as never before or since.³ While the conscription crisis has attracted a wide attention,

¹ J. Jupp, Australian Party Politics. Second edition, Melbourne, 1968. pp. 100-101.

² K.E. Beazley for example includes them with banking and finance as the most controversial pre-occupations encountered for his own study Caucus as an Instrument for Determining the Policy and Tactics of the FPLP in the Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1960. M.A. thesis, A.N.U. 1967.

³ E. Scott, Australia During the War. Second edition, Sydney, 1937; L.L. Robson, The First A.I.F. : A Study of its Recruitment, 1914-18. Melbourne, 1970; on the ALP particularly - I. Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics. Canberra, 1965.

inevitably concentrating much upon the Labor parties, it was a highly complicated phenomenon in each separate party in the individual states and at the federal level.¹ As a confederal organisation examination must concentrate then upon each party in its own terms, its political environment, socio-economic base, electoral position, ideological climate and leadership in order to explain changes to the federal platform. Defence and foreign policies occupied attention at every federal conference during this period, especially during the war, but even after the post-1918 return to normalcy there were significant changes either made or attempted at successive conferences up until 1930; the subject was then one of a persistently recurring nature over the whole period.² This study is an attempt to place these later developments within the context both of the prewar and wartime periods.

In organisation the ALP is a confederal structure³ composed of six largely autonomous state branches and a federal party.⁴ Normatively, federal policy is decided by a conference of equal delegations from the state parties and embodied in a federal platform binding all members, including Federal Parliamentary Labor Party members, who retain allegiance to their respective states. From 1915 a further body was formed based also upon federal representation, the federal executive, designed to administer national party affairs, interpret policy planks when they existed and to give direction between federal conferences where none was apparent. In practice this formal structure is subject to a number of formal qualifications to its theoretically democratic operation. Principally there is the problem identified in the critique of Michels in 1915 that political parties as organisations are inherently

¹ Nevertheless only two detailed studies have been published on the subject, namely J.R. Robertson, 'The Conscription Issue and the National Movement in Western Australia: June, 1916 to December, 1917.' University Studies in Western Australian History 3, 3 October, 1959 pp. 5-57 and P.M. Gibson, 'The Conscription Issue in South Australia, 1916-1917.' University Studies in History 4,2 1963-4 pp. 47-80.

² See particularly P.M.C. Hasluck, The Government and the People, 1939-1941. Canberra, 1952; L. Ross, 'Some Factors in the Development of Labor's Foreign Policy.' A.Q. 3,1, March, 1949 pp. 32-46; K.E. Beazley, 'Labour and Foreign Policy.' A.Q. 20,2 1966 pp. 125-134; J. Spigelman, 'Isolationism and Internationalism in ALP Foreign Policy.' A.Q. 37,4 December, 1965 pp. 65-77; J.M. McCarthy, 'The ALP and the Armed Services. Theory and Practice.' L.H. 25 November, 1973 pp. 58-67.

³ R. Cooksey, Lang and Socialism. A Study in the Great Depression, Canberra, 1971 p. xi.

⁴ L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901-1951. Melbourne, 1955 pp. 12-13.

oligarchical because of the limitations of human nature and structural necessity, ultimately leading to a party run by and for the leadership.¹ This generalisation can be assimilated by its acceptance as a relative characteristic with leadership control and rank and file interests having a varying relationship, the former being capable of being balanced out in the long term by the latter. At the federal level especially the ALP structure has placed federal politicians at several removes from the rank and file of the state branches and during this period there was first a challenge then reassertion of freedom from close state executive control on matters of general importance not covered by the platform of the ALP. This conservative bent at the federal level was encouraged rather than inhibited by the performance of the federal executive.² Secondly, because the Australian Labor parties have always needed to appeal to broader constituencies than the unions and branches making up the membership in order to win office there has been a built-in conflict between sectional and national responsibilities.³

If the FPLP was well favored by a broad licence through organisational causes it was especially capable of a wide initiative in imposing its own will on defence and foreign policies. From the start the federal Labor platform was abbreviated and highly general and as it developed in both length and comprehensiveness proved highly susceptible to the urging of FPLP leadership suggestions in these areas, where the federal politicians possessed inherent advantages of expertise, authority and experience. In government this independence was greatly increased by cabinet responsibility for implementation and administration of party policies⁴ and the inherent nature of decision making by governments in defence and foreign affairs, which involve small elites and permit of none but the most general party political policies exercising an influence. The attempt by a political party to establish fairly explicit constraints upon its leaders and the success obtained will be another of the themes pursued here.

¹ R. Michels, Political Parties. New York, 1959.

² D.W. Rawson, 'Federalism and the Party System.' Typescript deposited at the Menzies Library, ANU. 1954.

³ V. Gordon Childe, How Labour Governs. London, 1923; second edition with foreword by F.B. Smith Melbourne, 1964. Chapter V.

⁴ Crisp, The Australian Federal Labor Party. pp. 127-9.

Having stressed that even in a party such as the ALP, with a strong tradition of rank and file control, the amount of influence by the party over the leadership is usually minimal and restricted to very general areas, the party structure did nevertheless provide machinery by which the federal leaders could be challenged. Formal channels for the exertion of pressures were available, although dependent upon the determination and confidence of the subordinate groups using them for their effectiveness. Foreign and defence policy making, while normally remote and abstract to all but a small group of practitioners can also be the subject of intense public interest and concern and is amenable to the same processes of public response and pressure group activity as purely domestic issues.¹ To the extent that such policies have domestic repercussions leading to pressures for change - as, for example, in adoption of a comprehensive peacetime military training scheme, an escalating commitment to a foreign war or threatened involvement in international disputes - the federal Labor platform-making procedure facilitated the formulation and expression of such demands.

The most suggestive model of the dynamic process in the Labor movement has been that advanced by Ian Turner, in the following terms:

that the trade unions provided most of the impetus for change in the movement's policy and structure, that this impetus for change (in so far as it went beyond immediate trade union demands) originated with left-wing minorities, and that it succeeded to the extent that these minorities won support within the trade unions, which in turn depended on the response of workers generally to their social and economic situation.²

Almost inevitably this approach involves a concentration upon small socialist sects and radical groups in the Labor parties as the articulators and popularisers of policy initiatives at the expense of the broad mass of the rank and file. Confusion of the attitudes and policies of these elites with the views of hundreds of thousands of trade unionists is an easy error; needless to say there may only be a tenuous relationship between the two. For limitations of space, the strictures imposed by theme and inherent methodological problems it is not possible to explore this relationship here, though it is suggested

¹ L.W. Milbrath, 'Interest Groups and Foreign Policy' in J.M. Rosenau ed. Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy. New York, 1967.

² Industrial Labour and Politics. p. XX.

that radical programs may obtain mass support in times of socio-economic unrest without necessarily involving acceptance or even understanding of the theoretical underpinnings. In this way left wing groups and other parties can exert an influence upon the policies of the Labor parties out of proportion to their mass support without needing to rely upon dexterous manipulation - in fact one of the outstanding features of the period was the persistence of support for political Labor from the rank and file. This study of the determination of federal Labor policy will accordingly be concerned with the success of efforts inspired by radical elites to upset or place constraints upon the federal leadership in the field of defence and foreign policies.

Being concerned to such a large extent with power in the Labor parties, it is necessary to stress the difficulty of 'power' as a concept. It will be more useful and accurate to work in terms of an influence/domination continuum, from possession of a mere voice in deliberations to complete freedom in determining adoption of policies, with any number of gradations in between. By establishing the groups and factions upon such a continuum, their zones of acceptance in terms of the issues on which they seek to influence or control and the extent to which they do effect changes, together with the sections or institutions in the Labor parties which are most susceptible to such changes¹ it will prove possible to specify with greater clarity the origins of and responsibility for ALP defence and foreign policies.

¹ Making use of 'Some Notes on the Concept of Power' by P.H. Partridge in C.A. Hughes ed. Readings in Australian Government. Brisbane, 1968.

CHAPTER ONE

1908-16 : the Issues and the Crisis

The Issues Emerge; 1908-16.

After the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) came together in 1901 it quickly established itself as a policy initiator in the Australian Labor Party, most notably in areas of special competence such as defence and foreign policies.¹ This dominance was exercised despite ALP constitutional provisions, which formally empowered the federal conference to formulate the federal platform and, later, the federal executive to interpret its planks. The FPLP leadership possessed great prestige and far greater expertise in many areas than any other section of the ALP; it exercised this to good effect in the absence of concerted action by the various state executives and of any coherent union body, apart from the few nationally organised single unions and an extremely rudimentary interstate structure. Just as the FPLP executive led debate in caucus and presented the Labor policy in federal parliament, so it was also able to dominate the triennial federal conference and give the lead on such occasions as the drafting of election manifestos and statements on international developments as they arose. Prior to 1916 the caucus leaders' 'substantial working autonomy',² was amply demonstrated in the evolution of Labor's defence plank from the 1908 federal conference, where the vague provision for a 'citizen defence force' was enlarged in the form it was to retain for the next decade, to read 'Citizens' Defence Force with compulsory military training, and Australian owned and controlled Navy.'³ Moved by the FPLP leader, J.C. Watson, and seconded by J. Hutchison, MHR, the debate was confined mainly to FPLP members, of whom no fewer than twelve contributed; this was the culmination of pressure emanating from Watson himself and, most loudly, from W.M. Hughes, MHR. Hughes was not a delegate to this conference, but was a long time advocate within the party of strong defence based upon compulsory military training. Both

¹ L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party. Melbourne, 1955 is by far the best introduction, especially chapters one, two and seven.

² Ibid. p.8.

³ Carried by 24 votes to 7, Report ALP federal conference, 1908 p.20.

Hughes and Watson were members of the principal military lobby, the Australian National Defence League.¹

Although impelled by fears of Japan, this policy was justified in such a way as to stress its wholesome and salutary democratic nature; given the need for some defence force, a universal training scheme precluded formation of a militaristic professional body, as a bulwark of the capitalist class, and ensured equality of sacrifice by both individuals and wealth.² While several other caucus members were unenthusiastic and led the opposition to it, Frank Tudor and King O'Malley being noticeably in disagreement, the policy was fated to remain and an amendment in favor of a voluntary training system, moved by J.H. Catts MHR and Senator E. Findley, was defeated by 21 to 10.³ Having gained assent to what Watson had stressed was just a general principle, it was in fact left to the federal caucus defence committee headed by Minister for Defence Senator G.F. Pearce to work out the detailed proposals late in 1909.⁴ Opposition to compulsion was not quietened and spirited resistance developed during caucus deliberations, at one stage Pearce offering his resignation, but approval for the policy was affirmed by a vote of 15-9 and opponents who had promised their electors a voluntary system were placated by a later amendment enabling them to exercise a free hand on the issue.⁵

Labor policy was effectively implemented by successive non-Labor federal governments prior to 1910 so that the Fisher Labor Government from 1910-1913, which took office at the height of a public scare over Japan, had little to do but add the later suggestions in a report by Lord Kitchener to produce an unusually comprehensive and, in practice,

¹ L.F. Fitzhardinge, William Morris Hughes. A Political Biography. Vol. one, Sydney, 1964 pp. 136-147, 220-224.

² See speeches by Watson and Hutchison and of later speakers such as Holman, Report ALP federal conference, 1908 pp. 16-18 passim.

³ Ibid. p.20.

⁴ FPLP 30 September, 6-27 October, 1909.

⁵ Ibid 13 October 1909. See also Pearce's remarks about a 'troublesome section' in his autobiography Carpenter to Cabinet. London, 1951 pp. 104-106.

unduly onerous military scheme which after submission to the electors in 1910 and fresh approval, met with little further opposition from caucus. Both parties' naval and military policies implemented at the start of the second decade of the century were near enough to be described as bi-partisan. The ALP federal conference in 1912 at Hobart indicated general satisfaction with the Labor government's performance in reviewing specific details of the Defence Act, which had by then been operative in its full form for a year. Most contention took place over the question of employment of the army within Australia and the desire of many in the Labor movement for an explicit prohibition of the use of troops in industrial disputes.¹ Little by way of public opposition appeared until 1911-12 when the cost of the scheme came to be realised by the general public and was given voice primarily by left wing minority parties and religious or civil liberty groups.² The Labor parties in each of the states offered little hostility except for an increasing concern that the burden of participation in the scheme be as fairly distributed as possible; these dissatisfactions culminated at the 1915 federal conference of the ALP in Adelaide, where a number of items submitted suggesting amendments to the Defence Act were referred on the last day to the government for action without instruction or elaboration.³ Labor defence policy prior to the conscription crisis of 1916 was almost entirely the creation of the federal caucus leaders in both general principles and detailed application as approved by the federal ALP structure.

¹ Report ALP federal conference, 1912 pp. 47-48.

² L.C. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia. London, 1935 - mainly the early chapters; T.W. Tanner, 'The Introduction of Compulsory Military Training in Australia, 1901-1914.' ADHS March/April 1968 pp. 17-30, based upon a Ph.D. thesis of the same title, University of New England, 1972.

³ Minutes W.A. state executive 20 February, 1915; Report ALP federal conference, 1915 p. 51.

While adoption of a rigorous system of compulsory military training from the age of 12 to 26 for all fit males and establishment of an Australian navy of substantial dimensions were impelled in part by a growing sense of nationalism, it was nevertheless accepted that Australian fortunes were inextricably bound up with those of the British Empire and the defence scheme was implemented with this in mind. According to the Imperial division of labor the Dominions were to look to local responsibilities within a framework permitting a combined response to any threat to British Imperial hegemony and although the exact form of reaction in any emergency had not been spelled out except for naval co-operation, there was little dispute concerning Australian involvement as part of the larger unit. This foreign policy of 'imperialist nationalism' was also largely bi-partisan from 1908¹ and no platform guide was considered necessary to delineate the relationship in any detail. Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher went to London as the Australian representative at the 1911 Imperial Conference without any especial instructions from the party. Consequently it was unsurprising when at the outbreak of war in August, 1914 the ALP position should be fairly firm, although not unanimous.² In the midst of a federal election campaign official policy was set out in a manifesto drafted by Hughes³ and released under the signatures of Fisher and FPLP secretary David Watkins.

Our interests and our very existence are bound up with those of the Empire. In time of war half measures are worse than none. If returned with a majority we shall pursue with the utmost rigor and determination every course necessary for the defence of the Commonwealth and the Empire in any and every contingency.

On the hustings Fisher himself resurrected in several forms an old rhetorical phrase and pledged Australia to her last man and last shilling in support of a successful result.⁴ Addressing Parliament as the newly

¹ C. Grimshaw, 'Australian Nationalism and the Imperial Connection, 1900-1914.' AJPH 3,2 May 1958 pp. 161-182; based upon the author's M.A. thesis, Some Aspects of Australian Attitudes to the Imperial Connection, 1900-1919. University of Queensland, 1957.

² J.B. Welfield identifies a small FPLP group which was in serious doubts about the war from the start in 'The Labor Party and the War, 1914-1915'. ADHS November, 1966 pp. 30-43.

³ According to Frank Anstey M.H.R. C.P.D. 81.28 February, 1917 p. 10750; FPLP executive meeting 16 June, 1914.

⁴ E. Scott, Australia During the War. second edition, Sydney 1937 pp. 22-3.

returned Prime Minister with a decisive majority in both Houses this was repeated¹ and the government plunged itself into the preparation and despatch of an expeditionary force to the Middle East, whence the Gallipoli venture was mounted in 1915. Recruiting for the force remained however a state matter and it was there that Labor opposition to reinforcement and, ultimately, to participation in the war itself arose. While tensions were inherent in the Labor movement at this time, trouble really began between the state parties and the FPLP at the time of the accession to federal leadership of W.M. Hughes.

Fisher had been a popular and affable leader in the prewar FPLP - a consensus man unchallenged in an organisation which was largely self-regulating and in which the only recognisable faction was a 'torpedo brigade', a ginger group consisting of King O'Malley, Dr. W.R.N. Maloney, J.H. Catts and others. Nevertheless there were structural tensions in the party leading in mid-1915 to a demand from caucus that the government pay greater attention to consulting the rank and file and accept some measure of influence from it.² Such problems have been advanced as the reason for Fisher's decision on 26 October to resign his parliamentary seat and accept the post of High Commissioner in London, ostensibly for reasons of ill-health, but there was also the suggestion that he was helped out of office by the fractiousness of Hughes, goading Fisher into an acrimonious determination to leave.³ Hughes had long been recognised as the real dynamo in the leadership, though only Attorney-General, his strength resting on his position in the N.S.W. party and ability in the federal cabinet rather than popularity in caucus.⁴ He was the natural and unanimous choice as new leader, with Frank Tudor replacing him as deputy.⁵

¹ C.P.D. 75. 14 October, 1914 p. 174.

² FPLP 10, 14 June 1915.

³ N.J.O. Makin, Federal Labour Leaders. Sydney, 1961 pp. 34-35.

⁴ Fitzhardinge William Morris Hughes pp. 252-3; 'W.M. Hughes and the Federal Labor Leadership'. H.S. 12, 45 October, 1965 pp. 123-5.

⁵ FPLP 30 October, 1915.

Hughes, the tireless agitator in prewar years for compulsory military training and home defence, had been an enthusiastic exponent of whole-hearted involvement in the war from the start. Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, the Governor-General, commended him to the British government as 'a most sincere Imperialist and to him more than any other is due the progress made by Australia in naval and military preparation'.¹ Australian government influence over the conduct of the war had been minimal and early dispute over the size of the contingent to be sent overseas was deliberately dampened by the Governor-General, but the issue of Japan very soon developed as a cause for disagreement with Britain and for domestic division. German colonial possessions in the Pacific had been seized at the start of the war by Australian and Japanese forces, the latter acting under the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and an effective demarcation line between the two areas of responsibility had been settled on at the Equator after consultations in London by the British and Japanese governments. Australia had then been informed of this arrangement, Munro-Ferguson instructed to prepare her for a permanent postwar settlement on this basis and the matter kept from public disclosure. At first the Governor-General was able to report that the Australian government was likely to view 'with equanimity, or at any rate without serious protest, a continued occupation of these possessions by Japan should that be found expedient at the peace settlement.'² As the implications began to sink in however Australian political leaders began to register protests and in April Fisher decided to 'inform his colleagues in the most concise terms as to the attitude of the home government and seems to have had second thoughts about the advisability of such concessions.'³ Later though it was reported that he had merely assured cabinet that the matter would remain one for postwar determination. The issue refused to die hereafter though and Fisher became subject to serious alarm as to Japanese ambitions on the basis of such information as he was receiving from a variety of indirect and semi-official sources.⁴

¹ Munro-Ferguson - Asquith 5 December, 1915. Novar papers MS 696/699-700.

² Munro-Ferguson - L.V. Harcourt, Secretary of State for Colonies, 24 February, 1915, Ibid 696/665-666.

³ Ibid 13 April, 1915 696/679.

⁴ The matter has been treated illuminatingly by D.C.S. Sissons in an M.A. thesis Australia's Attitude to Japan and Defence, 1890-1923. University of Melbourne, 1956. See also Fitzhardinge, 'Australia, Japan and Great Britain, 1914-1918: A Study in Triangular Diplomacy.' H.S. 14, 54 April, 1970 pp. 250-9 and D.K. Dignan, 'Australia and British Relations with Japan, 1914-1921.' A.O. 21, 2 August, 1962 pp. 135-150.

Rigid censorship was imposed by the government on any discussion of the Japanese challenge for the duration of the war for fear of offending what was a major ally actively engaged in assisting to convoy Australian troops to the fighting zones. Under the War Precautions Act it became an offence to prejudice the relationships of His Majesty with Japan by reference not only to the latter's territorial gains and alleged strategic intentions but also to colored labor and immigration from Japan to Australia, for fear that to do so would tempt the very fate it was sought to warn against. As Hughes himself put the problem, 'an insult to Japan might send her over to the other side and so utterly destroy us.'¹ When Hughes became Prime Minister he was almost immediately impressed by the seriousness of the matter when aggressively approached by the Japanese Consul-General to Sydney, S. Shimizu, over his government's desire for Australian ratification of commercial arrangements entered into by Great Britain as part of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. This, coupled with the issue of disposition of the Pacific islands and doubts as to British support of the white Australia policy, lay behind Hughes' decision to go almost at once to London. At this stage caucus appears to have been advised of the danger for the first time and only three members voted against Hughes' proposed trip after the Prime Minister 'went into detail to show the necessity of someone going to England to place the Australian views in connection with any settlement of the war,'² but the information tendered remained rather sketchy and did not apparently convey any sense of real crisis.

By this stage the relations of the federal Labor government with the Labor movement had entered into an unhappy era. In September, 1915 a compulsory war census had been taken which was accompanied by a 'Call to Arms' from Hughes announcing the need for an additional 50,000 men in the AIF and containing a section interrogating eligibles on their willingness to enlist. Great antagonism was engendered by the census within the union wing of the parties, due to the suspicion that it foreshadowed military and/or industrial conscription, as had already been ruled out by Fisher in a letter to the Queensland state secretary

¹ Hughes - Pearce 3 December, 1917. Pearce papers AWM 419/80/2, Bundle 6/20.

² FPLP 11 November, 1915. J.H. Catts, mover of the motion endorsing the trip, later recalled that the reasons advanced had been connected with Japan and Australian defence. CPD 84. 24 April, 1918 p. 4195.

of the Labor party.¹ Hughes denied any such intention of changing policy but the matter was exacerbated when, at a time of increasing costs of living in nearly every state, the Prime Minister abandoned bills carried in parliament to permit resubmission of crucial constitutional amendments affecting economic and industrial powers to referenda at the end of the year. This expedient was endorsed by caucus² on the grounds of the need to avoid partisan strife by accepting a suggestion that the six states be asked to surrender the powers needed to the federal government for the duration of the war. It aroused a storm of controversy however, revealing a basic dichotomy between those in the Labor parties who considered the war important enough to suspend matters of salience in the platform and in election promises and others who did not regard the war as being of such overwhelming importance to justify neglect of Labor's program of social reform.

The Victorian state executive especially had been geared up for the referenda and took strong objection to this disregard of an explicit federal conference decision, as approved by federal executive and promised in the federal election manifesto. Failing to obtain satisfaction in an interview with Hughes it called a special meeting of the federal executive to consider two resolutions of protest at the decision. The issue involved seemed quite clear - a disregard of a specific government commitment; the federal executive had been created in Adelaide in 1915 especially 'to fulfill similar functions in regard to federal Labor affairs to those carried out by the executives of the various states.'³ Senator T. Givens, federal president and a Hughes supporter, defended the action when the federal executive met on 6-7 January, 1916 in Melbourne against a motion submitted by the South Australian party

That the executive regrets that the FPLP assented to the postponement of the constitutional referendum proposals without reference to the Australian Political Labor Executive and urges that in future no action in opposition to the expressed wish of conference shall be taken without consultation with such executive.

¹ Stating that 'our party has no intention of amending the Defence Act to provide for compulsory service abroad.' FPLP 12, 19 November, 1914.

² By 51-6 at a special meeting, Ibid 4 October, 1915.

³ Report by NSW federal executive delegates W.M. Hughes and J.D. Fitzgerald MLC. Report NSW state executive, 1915.

This was carried after a long discussion in which Hughes defended himself and the Prime Minister swept out of the meeting in protest against the censure against him, threatening to leave the movement. His recovery was sufficiently speedy though to enable him to subvert the decision overnight, intimidating all but the intransigent Victorian delegates Laurie Cohen and Arch. Stewart. When the latter arrived at the appointed hour for the resumed meeting next day he reported that they were 'astounded to find all the other members of the executive assembled. He asked Senator Givens what it meant, and was told "It is just a little informal chat we are having."' ¹ Hughes' informal chat resulted in recommitment of the resolution which was then withdrawn, a modified motion approved and the whole matter then brushed aside, to the chagrin of the Victorians. This failure of the first real test of federal executive authority had far-reaching consequences and instead of being the check upon the FPLP originally envisaged it remained a toothless body hampered by lack of resources, moral authority and its spasmodic ability to meet. No substantial brake on the Labor government existed then, apart from the federal conference, except for whatever pressure the individual state executives could exert.

Hostility in the Labor movement against the federal government was not confined to Hughes alone, whom the acerbic Victorian Labor paper the Labor Call condemned for the "'hymns of hate" he is always chortling, his Imperial sycophancy, his anti-democratic legislation and administration and his sins of omission and commission against working class principles.' ² Next to the Prime Minister, the Postmaster-General, William Webster, was perhaps the most widely disliked minister, the general secretary of the Australian Telegraph and Telephone Construction and Maintenance Union registering 'complete dissatisfaction' at his performance before a meeting of the Brisbane branch of that union, where he was supported by several FPLP members present. ³ Later Webster was censured by his own party at the NSW state conference in April for his anti-union attitude. ⁴ The

¹ Report of the federal secretary, A. Stewart, Minutes ALP federal conference, 1918 p. 12.

² Labor Call 16 December, 1915.

³ J.B. Sharpe, J. Page and W.F. Finlayson, MSHR, and Senators Mullan and Turley. Daily Standard 17, 20 January, 1916.

⁴ Australian Worker 27 April, 1916.

unfortunate George Pearce, later Acting-Prime Minister from 16 January to 31 July, 1916 during Hughes' absence, was subjected to constant and often acidulous criticism for his administration of the Department of Defence.¹ Hughes' natural autocratic predilections and inability to brook interference were reinforced by a High Court decision confirming his extraordinary powers under the War Precautions Act over the whole of Australian society, enabling him to govern the country 'with a fountain pen and a good lawyer',² in marked distinction to Labor principles. Indeed, cabinet government as a whole appears ineffectual during this period; according to one member of it, Hugh Mahon, the Minister for External Affairs,

Each Minister's hands were full of his own departmental affairs; the duties of all were onerous and exacting, and we fell into the habit of usually accepting without much question the advice of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence on all matters arising out of the war. We had not the time and seldom had the information to test the views placed before us ... Indeed, in several matters of the first importance, the Cabinet as a body was not consulted at all, action having been taken by the Prime Minister on his own volition or in consultation with one other member of the government.³

As a result of his own experience leading the government, Pearce concluded that action to strengthen the ministry was essential to prevent breakdowns in the forthcoming parliamentary session and proposed a reshuffle of portfolios and appointment of under-secretaries to the key ministers to assist the work but not actually sit in cabinet: Hughes concurred with this in principle.⁴ Under the circumstances this trend was probably unavoidable to some extent but the essential point is inescapable that a marked divergence from the expected standard of behaviour of a Labor government had taken place.

¹ J. Merritt, George Foster Pearce: Labour Leader. M.A. thesis, University of Western Australia, 1963.

² H.V. Evatt, Australian Labour Leader. Sydney, 1940. pp. 367-8.

³ Address by Mahon in Perth 20 March, 1917. Report W.A. state conference, 1917 pp. 4-12.

⁴ Pearce - Hughes 22 June, 1916 and Hughes - Pearce 25 June, 1916. Pearce papers AWM 419/80/2. Bundle 3/3/82.

The conscription crisis: 1916

Even before leaving Australia Hughes had equivocated on the subject of conscription for overseas service, qualifying an earlier categorical assurance that he would not resort to it by an admission that it was conceivable in certain circumstances but that 'no conscription will be brought into this country without an appeal to the country.'¹ His visit to Britain and the front lines confirmed his conviction that Australia must adopt conscription to fulfill its proper role in the war - partly as a matter of justice, partly through enthusiasm for the job at hand and the need to replace the high casualties then being sustained on the Somme and partly because of the Japanese problem. After consultations in London Hughes concluded that 'all our fears - or conjectures - that Japan was and is most keenly interested in Australia are amply borne out by the facts,' fearing that even a temporary Allied reverse would lead to victory of the pro-German elements in Japan and that further British requests for Japanese assistance would lead to even greater concessions against Australian interests. He made it clear to Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, that his government would be prepared to acquiesce in establishment of the Equator as a dividing line between Japanese and British possessions and the conceding of certain commercial rights if necessary, but would not go any further.² Against the future Hughes determined upon an 'insurance policy' strategy to safeguard Australian security by a maximum effort on the Empire's behalf. A well placed observer of government policy at the time explained the reasoning behind this:

By our effort from 1914 to 1918 we piled up a credit balance that seems to me to outweigh our debt to Great Britain for the safety she assured us until 1914 ... Mr. Hughes had in mind our future claim on Great Britain when he kept Australia up to its war effort in the first conscription campaign and afterwards.³

¹ Statement to a Brisbane Industrial Council delegation on 8 December, 1915. Daily Standard 9 December, 1915.

² Hughes - Pearce 21 April, 1916. Pearce papers AWM. 419/80/2. Bundle 3/3/32.

³ E.L. Piesse writing on 22 May, 1936. Piesse papers MS 882/9/116. Edmund L. Piesse, 1880-1947, was Director of Military Intelligence, Department of Defence, Melbourne from 1916 to 1919 and Director of the Pacific Branch, Prime Minister's Department, from 1919 to 1923. See also his article 'Japan and Australia', Foreign Affairs. 4, 3 April 1926 pp. 475-488 and Sissons' Australia's Attitude to Japan and Defence.

By agreement Pearce discouraged public debate on conscription until Hughes' return and refused to admit any projected change of policy, arranging independently however for activation of the compulsory call-up for training provisions of the Defence Act in an attempt to encourage enlistments. Upon arrival in Adelaide Hughes made a stirring speech for defence of the white Australia policy which was promptly censored in a pattern which must have tried the Prime Minister's patience to the limit - he had very strong arguments for conscription based upon the Japan threat but could not voice them because of the necessity for circumspection in reference to that country in all public utterances.¹

Hughes' preoccupations led him to adopt the stance of a convinced Imperialist. Others in his party shared similar fears but adopted quite opposite conclusions from them, marking a fundamental divergence of interpretation. Japan had been a subject of interest in the Labor press as a potential source of cheap colored labour and immigration by Asians into Australia, as well as more sinister intentions. Greatly agitated over the Japanese 21 Demands on China one FPLP member, J.H. Catts, had circulated a memorandum amongst his parliamentary colleagues in all parties during May, 1916 calling for more efficient organisation of home defence forces.² At a secret session of both Houses of Parliament after his return Hughes presented a confidential resume of his experiences which confirmed for Catts and a number of others the impression that Japan was intent on leveling requirements on Australia that she make commercial concessions and agree to permit immigration landing rights to Japanese.³ Despite the censorship the same fears were transmitted further afield and were referred to as 'common knowledge' at the time of the conscription referendum campaign.⁴

¹ Piesse papers MS 882/9/288-9. Even the military author of the censorship provisions in Australia accepted by the press in 1914 'never for a moment thought they'd stand them.' C.E.W. Bean, Two Men I Knew. Sydney, 1957 p. 14.

² CPD 81 22 February, 1917 pp. 10575-6 and Ibid 84 25 April, 1918 p. 4189.

³ This belief was extensive, see for example the debates on holding of the conscription referendum Ibid 80. 14, 15, 20 September, 1916; Dr. W. Maloney p. 8593; W. Webster p. 8626; Frank Anstey pp. 8680-1; J.H. Catts and J.E. Fenton pp. 8699-8703 and 8731. Also speeches by Charles McDonald, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Daily Standard 24 October, 1916, Senator Mullan Ibid; W.F. Finlayson MHR Ibid 11 October, 1916; Senator W.J. Maughan Ibid 17 October, 1916.

⁴ A. McCallum in an address to the Midland District Council, ALF. Minutes Midland D.C. 31 January, 1917.

Several of the key union leaders echoed these views in public statements at the time, such as the Acting-President of the AWU who replaced the conscriptionist W.G. Spence, W.J. Riordan,¹ and other Victorians who led the anti-conscription campaign.² The Prime Minister vehemently sought to deny any such interpretation³ but his credibility had so far deteriorated that if anything he merely compounded the suspicion,⁴ and at the height of the conscription campaign the Japanese Consul-General himself felt obliged to disavow any malign intentions on the part of his government.⁵

The basic difference between Hughes and FPLP moderates like Catts, radicals such as Senator Ferricks and later a highly important group of NSW unionists, was that the latter group believed the Japanese danger to be so perilous and imminent as to make concentration upon the Western Front in Europe alone strategic folly. Hughes was content that any challenge would be mounted diplomatically after the war and desired to win the gratitude of the British for Australia's part in the war with this in mind, whereas many of his principle opponents fully expected a threat to develop before the conclusion of the war, and especially if it continued to go badly for the Allies. By this reasoning it was deeply dangerous to send the great bulk of Australian manpower overseas when it might be needed at home. This is not to deny other honorable or less admirable reasons for opposition to conscription for overseas service, which was nothing if not a complex question.⁶ At the union level

¹ Daily Standard 16 October, 1916.

² For example J.H. Scullin and F.J. Riley, secretary of the Australian Peace Alliance. Ibid 9 October, 1916.

³ Register 9 October, 1916.

⁴ Piesse papers MS 882/9/301.

⁵ Ibid 21 October, 1916.

⁶ Most adequate account of the matter is that by T.A. Metherell, The Conscription Referenda; October, 1916 and December, 1917: an inward turned nation at war. Ph.D. University of Sydney, 1971, presenting the crisis in terms of domestically-derived imperatives. See also H. McQueen, A New Britannia. Penguin, 1970 pp. 76-8. Sissons' Australia's Attitude to Japan and Defence provides a vital dimension to Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics and L.L. Robson, The First AIF. A Study of its Recruitment 1914-1918. Melbourne, 1970.

conscription aroused misgivings which had been voiced only by a socialist and Christian-pacifist minority, namely that the system was inherently unfair to the working class. As class antagonisms were sharpened during the war years under the social and economic strains encountered, the conscription crisis represented for many workers the embodiment of all their dissatisfactions: Japan intruded most obviously into their concerns as a source of cheap goods and cheap colored labour, which the anti-conscriptionists were not loath to stress.

While still in Europe Hughes had been warned by Pearce that a majority of the FPLP was opposed to conscription for overseas service, after the latter had prevailed upon Labor whip, James Page, to privately sound as many of the members as possible.¹ Page later publicly claimed that 'the Federal Labor party would never consent to it.'² The Prime Minister's problem then lay in circumventing this opposition while still remaining in office and to do so he disregarded the arrangement arrived at in January at the federal executive meeting. There

Mr. McCallum (W.A.) asked the Prime Minister if he would give his word as head of the government that in order to maintain solidarity, he would convene a meeting of the interstate conference before introducing conscription. This Mr. Hughes refused to do. It was pointed out to him that any action the Commonwealth Government or the parliamentary party may take in this regard would not bind the organisations. Mr. Hughes replied that he understood that perfectly well. However the president (Senator Givens) gave his assurance that if the government made any move to introduce conscription he would summon a meeting of the executive.³

Pearce and Hughes sampled Labor opinion in the eastern states before committing themselves in August. First came the secret report to parliament which failed to swing a majority; Hughes could have carried a Bill in the House of Representatives with his Labor supporters plus the Liberal opposition, but Labor held 31 out of 36 Senate seats and a majority of opponents there could have rejected the legislation or any War Precautions Act regulation. The caucus reaction to Hughes' return

¹ G.F. Pearce, Carpenter to Cabinet. London, 1951. p. 136.

² Daily Standard 1 May, 1916.

³ Report of federal executive delegate A. McCallum, Minutes W.A. state executive 6 March, 1916.

was initially encouraging however, the first meeting for the new session unanimously carrying a motion of welcome and congratulation for his work in London.¹ On the next day, Friday 25 August, the Prime Minister made his move at the preceding cabinet meeting introducing for the first time the proposal for a referendum on compulsory service. At no time did Hughes let the cabinet or caucus take a straight vote for or against conscription, knowing that only Pearce and Webster would support him from the ministry,² while in caucus two-thirds stood opposed to the imposition of compulsory service by law or regulation.³

Out of a ministry of ten it appears that an almost equal split developed over the proposal to hold a referendum but Hughes relied upon the principle of collective cabinet solidarity to prevent his ministerial opponents from carrying their opposition into the caucus.⁴ Much correspondence had built up in caucus during his absence seeking clarification on conscription and debate was initiated on this. Hughes took the plunge: 'After having explained our position in relation to the war I laid certain proposals in connection with the prosecution of the war before the party.'⁵ In a masterly performance Hughes presented a typical peroration - vociferous and dramatic, complete with flourished telegram 'just arrived from Lloyd-George' - and presented a case in terms of the losses suffered by the Allies and the grave situation on the Western Front. It became clear that Hughes was inciting the members to disregard their state parties, despite the decisions against conscription by the eastern state executives, and appeal over the heads of the organisations, which acted in ignorance of the full facts and were under

¹ FPLP 24 August, 1916.

² Hughes told the Governor-General that 'he had had no backing whatever in his original intention to challenge a vote in parliament on compulsory service.' Munro-Ferguson - Bonar-Law 29 October, 1916. Novar papers MS 696/834.

³ Claim by Catts Daily Standard 10 October, 1916, supported by Anstey's estimate recorded by Vol. Molesworth in 'Points in F. Anstey MHR speech, Town Hall 22 September, 1916.' Molesworth papers Uncat. MS 243/2/E.

⁴ W.G. Higgs quoted in the Westralian Worker 2 February, 1917.

⁵ Daily Standard 26 August, 1916. F.J. Riley was the Brisbane paper's Melbourne correspondent and was extremely well informed on the FPLP proceedings, scooping all papers in Australia in predicting the eventual outcome one day before the public announcement in parliament and accurately forecasting the split and disruption to follow. Out of 71 FPLP members 61 were in attendance on the Friday. Mahon was ill, two others on active service, six on an official visit to London and one on a private trip to the United Kingdom. Ibid 28 August, 1916.

the influence of 'a worthless section of disloyalists'. He would 'stake his life' that he could carry the hostile sections with him: the FPLP was responsible only to the electors, 50% of whom could be carried on a referendum for approval of compulsory overseas service. He conceded in debate that members would in any case have 'unlimited scope to say whatever you wish subject to the laws of your country.'¹ Caucus then met again on the next day, Saturday, in the afternoon and evening without decision, then again on Monday afternoon and evening, finally concluding the debate at around 2-2.30 a.m. on Tuesday morning, 29 August.²

The final decision was a compromise on the original proposal to use the Defence Act powers to call up eligibles in the primary class for training and to hold a referendum at the end of September to ratify their subsequent despatch to France. Instead, a one month period of grace would be extended to the voluntary system to fulfil what was set down as the minimum quota of replacements.

Mr. Hughes replied to the various speakers and after further discussion made a proposition that the government should not call up any men to the colors for training, until one month went by, but if the men responded by voluntary enlistment in sufficient numbers during this month and after no men should be called up until after the referendum on conscription was taken. If on the other hand the number of enlistments was not sufficient, men should be called to the colors after the month had elapsed.³

Even so Hughes had pushed his case to the limit, stringing out debate until the early hours of the morning when nearly a third of the members had gone to their homes or hotels, leaving only 44 to participate in the fateful vote.⁴ Moreover it appears that the closure of the debate may have been just in time to prevent serious embarrassment, as one close observer maintained that 'Victorian members had declared their intention

¹ Anstey - Henry Boote, editor of the Australian Worker, dated 'Friday night' - obviously 25 August after caucus adjourned. Boote papers MS 2070/1/73-78; also M. Blackburn The Conscription Referendum of 1916. Melbourne, 1936 p. 6.

² Daily Standard 28-30 August, 1916.

³ FPLP 28 August, 1916.

⁴ Senator E. Needham - McCallum, 12 March, 1917. W.A. state executive correspondence.

of refraining from voting but of fighting conscription in the event of it being put to the people.'¹ According to McCallum the final vote was most irregularly held in conditions of undue haste.

Mr. Hughes rose from his chair and delivered a passionate appeal. When his exhortation reached a climax, when what he deemed the psychological moment had arrived, he called on all those who favored his policy to hold up their right hands. 'Twenty-three,' he said. 'All against? Twenty. I declare the motion carried.' 'What vote?' some of the members asked. 'You have no motion. Who moved it? Who seconded it? How can you ask us to vote when no resolution is either moved or seconded?' Mr. Hughes gave no answer.²

It was enough as far as Hughes was concerned though and he then drafted his final proposals at a last session of cabinet on Wednesday, 30 August for presentation to the House and the nation in mid-afternoon. In the eventual form the proposal for the referendum remained and, if endorsed, compulsion would be applied to the extent necessary to make up the shortfall of volunteers for the next month. As an added measure Hughes called another secret session of both Houses to expose 'pertinent facts of great moment' which would enable the parliament to reconvene and consider the details of the referendum plan 'in the full light of all the knowledge that is in the possession of the Government.'³ It would appear that amongst the information disclosed at the session was a reprise of the Japanese threat.

Having informed parliament of the compromise arrived at Hughes lost little time in seeking to substantiate his claim that the rest of the movement could be talked around, having wired all Labor organisations in the interim asking them to suspend judgement until he could put his full case. On 1 September he addressed first the Victorian state executive but met a blank refusal to support holding of the referendum.⁴

¹ A. McCallum, 'Labor Impeaches the Hughes Dictatorship.' W.A. state executive pamphlet, 1917.

² Ibid.

³ CPD 79. 30 August, 1916 p. 8403.

⁴ E. J. Holloway, The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-17. Melbourne, 1966 pp. 5-6.

The following hectic week began with a trip to Sydney, where he found however that opponents had been sent up from Melbourne to present the other side of the story, and he met with little luck either before the state executive or the Sydney Labor Council.¹ Before the executive of the PLL Hughes made use of the Japan scare in one of the few instances outside of the confines of parliament.

The Prime Minister told a moving tale of a 'white speck in a colored ocean.' It was the sole burthen of a new song. Forgotten were the references to German psychology; the promises made to the British government; the terrible menace of the Hun and the need for men in Europe. 'Australia was but a few day's steam etc.' 'The whole course of evolution in the Pacific had catastrophically come to a head.' There was an ambassador in London! 'He said to me...!' 'I put him off!' All this with shrugs and gesticulations. There were uncompleted sentences which suggested what they did not say. It was a night when men read what they willed into the words which were more a key to a secret door than the confidential statement of a great statesman to the chosen confidants of his bosom.²

A motion in Hughes' favor by his supporters was lost by 21-5 and the Prime Minister warned that he would be expelled if he persisted in the scheme.³ One last channel of appeal remained open and Hughes went straight from Sydney to Adelaide, where he was able to catch the South Australian state conference of the Labor party on its second last day. More orthodox arguments here sufficed to win an equivocal resolution from the conference which his supporters were able to represent as a vote of confidence in Hughes' leadership, even though the party specifically stated its opposition to compulsory service.⁴ Again he had

¹ Minutes special meeting Sydney Labor Council 4 September, 1916.

² 'The Apostasy of W.M. Hughes.' A.W. 6 February, 1919. Reprinted from an article in the Westralian Worker. Also M.E. Lloyd, Sidelights on Two Referendums, 1916-1917. Sydney, 1952 and J.T. Lang, I Remember. Sydney, 1956 p. 66.

³ V. Molesworth, 'A History of the Industrial Section of the ALP.' Molesworth papers, Uncat. Mss 71/2/ Full Story and Documents. pp. 10-11.

⁴ Minutes S.A. state conference, 1916.

been shadowed by other members of federal caucus eager to point out inconsistencies in Hughes' arguments and impress upon members of the state party the strength of opposition to conscription elsewhere.¹

This last mixed result could not disguise the fact that the major Labor parties were convincingly opposed to conscription and the Prime Minister's strategy. Nevertheless Hughes pushed on with the referendum, which could not resolve the issue by deciding any constitutional point, for legislation or regulations would still have to be passed by both Houses if it was carried. Rather it was hoped by the conscriptionists that a resounding mandate for the policy could be used to intimidate the Labor movement into acquiescence, however reluctant it might have to be.² The majority of the FPLP succumbed to Hughes' bluff that without this minimal compromise he would be forced to resign. James Page, the Queensland MHR, presented a variant of this argument as being the reason for caucus approval of the referendum in a special address to the Queensland state executive; failing action by the government, Hughes argued, the opposition would have moved a motion of no-confidence in the government and, after a subsequent election and a likely win by the Liberals, conscription would have been introduced regardless and without the accompanying wealth taxes promised as a corollary to Hughes' scheme. If the party did not agree to the compromise Hughes threatened to resign and precipitate the same sequence.³ Munro-Ferguson had already offered a dissolution of the House of Representatives were conscription defeated in a straight vote but the cabinet had opposed this to a man.⁴ The threat of resignation was sufficient to keep the cabinet relatively quiescent during the crisis and to hold individual

¹ Hughes singled out Senator Ferricks and G.M. Burns, MHR for being 'guilty of conduct treacherous to the party' as a result of this episode. FPLP 14 September, 1916. Arch. Stewart and Maurice Blackburn also assisted in this regard under conditions in which personal emissaries sent from state to state were the only reliable means of communication between the respective parties.

² See Hughes' speech CPD 79. 1 September, 1916 p. 8425 and Pearce ibid p. 8409.

³ Minutes Queensland state executive 13 September, 1916.

⁴ Munro-Ferguson - Bonar-Law 10 November, 1916. Novar papers MS 696/251-4.

ministers firm against the pressures of the state parties. After Frank Tudor resigned despite the principle of solidarity which Hughes had insisted upon, a promise was extracted from the remainder that any further resignations on the basis of principle would be held over until after the referendum: according to Hugh Mahon 'the government was kept intact only by an understanding that while dissenting ministers need not support his campaign they would not oppose him.'¹

While both cabinet ministers and backbenchers were on the whole prepared to accept this situation the state parties were decidedly not. In constitutional terms the FPLP had been indemnified at the beginning of the year against attempts at interference by state branches by adoption at the January federal executive meeting of a Western Australian motion

That each state executive be informed that the decisions of any conference other than the interstate conference of the Australian Labor party shall not be binding on the federal Labor party or the federal government unless endorsed by such interstate conference.

Upon this authority many FPLP members felt justified in ignoring the decisions of their state parties in the initial stage of decision-making on the referendum.² This ruling had apparently been so little recognised and the issues of such great moment that in practice the state executives disregarded it. The opposition to conscription had stemmed from initially a small group of left-wing unionists and socialists and by 1916 was an article of faith for the majority of organised labor, being expressed by trade union bodies in the eastern states and at national union conferences in Melbourne and Hobart as well as in the state conferences and executives of the main Labor parties

¹ Westralian Worker 13 April, 1917. See also the correspondence concerning Albert Gardiner's resignation: Gardiner - Pearce 30 October, 1916; Pearce - Gardiner 2 November, 1916. Pearce papers AWM 49/80/2 Bundle 7/39.

² Statement by J. Page in a special report to the Queensland state executive. Minutes Qld. state executive 13 September, 1916. This measure to bolster the power of the federal parliamentary party between federal conferences had been sought by Hughes since 1912 and pre-dated the more explicit delineation of authority laid down in the twenties and thirties. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party pp. 31-2, 58-66.

before Hughes played his hand. The largest and most powerful individual unions had also expressed opposition at varying degrees of militancy¹ but because of the nature of FPLP operation were unable and unsuited to bring pressure to bear: this was left to the state parties. In 1916 two-thirds, or 47 out of 71 FPLP members, were also members of the NSW, Victorian and Queensland Labor parties, who could further claim the allegiance of 6 out of the 10 ministers and, regardless of formal provisions, all of these became subject to attempts at coercion.

Of all the state parties the Victorian PLC was most informed of the manoeuvrings which had led up to the referendum decision, due to the location of the federal parliament in Melbourne. It had been able to direct the 15 Victorian FPLP members closely and in mid-September when the enabling legislation was introduced by the Prime Minister instructed the two cabinet ministers from Victoria to withdraw from the ministry so that they could openly oppose the measure. Frank Tudor obliged readily and submitted his resignation to caucus on 14 September but Senator E.J. Russell temporised and was the only Victorian federal member to be expelled.² An attempt was made to embarrass Hughes over Tudor's action, Catts moving that it not be accepted and

That he be informed that refusal to advocate conscription for overseas service, either in or out of parliament at his own unfettered discretion, is no disqualification for ministerial office in a Labor government.

Another amendment was moved by Queensland Senator Mullan accepting and approving the resignation in protest against the referendum decision, but the Pearce suggestion that the vacancy be left open until after the

¹ AWU opposition at the beginning of the year had been unanimous and was reaffirmed at the announcement of the referendum. E. Grayndler, general secretary of the AWU, - A. Stewart 28 August, 1916. Quoted by Senator Ferricks. CPD 80. 21 September, 1916 p. 8777. For the Engineers see K.D. Buckley, The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia, 1852-1920. Canberra, 1970 pp. 219-20; the Miners' Federation - R. Gollan, The Coalminers of NSW, Melbourne, 1963, Chapter seven; the Ironworkers - J. Merritt, A History of the Federated Ironworkers of Australia, 1909-1952. Ph.D. thesis ANU, 1967. Cf. the reaction of the Printers: J. Hagan, Printers and Politics. A History of the Printing Unions, 1850-1950. Canberra, 1966 pp. 198-200.

² E.J. Holloway, The Australian Victory over Conscription. pp. 16-17.

poll won overwhelming support.¹ It was alleged that Hughes stopped the rot further by threatening that if any further resignations from the ministry occurred he would resign out of hand.² A similar situation obtained in Queensland where on 13 September state executive heard a report by Page on the federal position and forthwith issued a warning that endorsements would be withheld from any Queensland member who failed to vote against the enabling Bill.³ Bamford and Senator Givens defied the order and were expelled from the state party at the end of the month. W.G. Higgs, the federal Treasurer, was placed in a quandary, voting for the Military Services Referendum Bill but after barely escaping expulsion by state executive⁴ was forced to come out against conscription; this, and his plea that both FPLP factions had recommended that he stay in the ministry together with his resignation on the eve of the referendum saved him from retribution.⁵ In NSW the situation was more complex with no less than 18 FPLP members belonging to the PLL, of whom 3 were ministers, including Hughes himself. As soon as the referendum decision had been made state executive wired an affirmation of the NSW conference resolution to Melbourne which was intercepted and delayed in delivery by the authorities.⁶ There was no doubt existing as to the party's attitude however and early next month executive was petitioned by unions to expel Hughes.⁷ This was duly carried out with a

¹ FPLP 14 September, 1916.

² Report by F.J. Riley, Daily Standard 1 November, 1916.

³ Minutes Queensland state executive 13 September, 1916.

⁴ Ibid 2 October, 1916.

⁵ Ibid 20 November, 1916.

⁶ P.C. Evans, state secretary - A. Stewart 30 August, 1916, quoted by Senator Ferricks CPD 80. 21 September, 1916.

⁷ J. Burns - J. Power 6 September, 1916. Molesworth papers Uncat. MS 243/3/ Letters re formation of the Anti-Conscription League.

decision to throw the Prime Minister and another supporter, E.S. Carr, out of the party on 15 September, Hughes having 'announced in the federal parliament a policy which is not only in direct conflict with the wishes of the Labor movement, but which was not endorsed by the caucus, and is supported by only six out of ten members of the cabinet,' as well as in contravention of the instruction to NSW federal executive delegates to oppose conscription at all costs.¹ Further action was initiated to ascertain the views of other members and to take appropriate action on similar lines where necessary. Gardiner stayed in the ministry until 27 October but Webster left finally with Hughes in the November split. None of the three other states attempted to direct their federal members and they refused to agree to requests to convene a federal executive meeting or special federal conference, there being a requirement for the approval of four states for action of this type.

As it was, state party intervention proved to be of little effect with only twelve eastern states members supporting an amendment to the second reading of the Referendum Bill 'That, in the opinion of this House, conscription of human life is inadvisable, and that the proposal of this government, if given effect to, would be destructive of the best interests of Australia.' Of the rest only a total of 21 out of the 71-man FPLP were prepared to oppose the third reading, with 26 voting in favor.² All ministers voted for the Bill except for the Victorians - Tudor opposed and Russell abstained - and the West Australian, Mahon, who pleaded sickness. Lack of time, adequate and early information and the absence of support from the smaller states were the chief reasons for the failure of state efforts to prevent the referendum and prevail against the power of the federal Labor leadership: as Hughes had desired the battle now moved out on to the public platforms where he exercised the authority of office, advantages in access to publicity for his cause and considerable influence over the mass media and its content.

¹ T.D. Mutch in the A.W. 21 September, 1916.

² In the House the vote went 47-12 and in the Senate 17-9.

Freed from the responsibility of causing a dissolution brought about by Hughes' resignation and encouraged by the attitude of the major parties many more FLP members were prepared to oppose the conscription case in the referendum campaign than were prepared to block its being held altogether. Catts, Anstey and Finlayson took organisation in hand of caucus dissidents and on 29 September a manifesto was released containing the names of no less than thirty-four in opposition to an affirmative vote: it was claimed that there were others prepared to join the anti campaign. At Catts' suggestion a special committee was established to liaise with the various state parties, comprising

Victoria	F.G. Tudor	S.A.	G.E. Yates	1
N.S.W.	J.H. Catts	W.A.	Senator E. Needham	
Qld.	W.F. Finlayson	Tas.	Senator R.K. Ready	

This body had little actual influence upon events, the state parties and trade unions themselves being responsible for what co-ordination took place and, apart from Tudor's heartening example, the anti-conscription ministers contributed little until the intolerable situation created by Hughes forced the resignations of Higgs, Gardiner and Russell on the eve of the referendum, thus further confirming the disintegration of the federal Labor government.² It was the Labor movement in the states which initiated opposition to conscription for overseas service then bore the brunt of the campaign against it. Hughes' determination to introduce the measure was matched only by his desire to remain in office and resulted in the compromise solution arrived at by the federal party. That Hughes was enabled to get as far as he did with the proposal was due entirely to the strong position he enjoyed as federal Labor leader

¹ Finlayson - Catts 27 September, 1916; Catts - J. Mathews 27 September, 1916. Pearce papers AWM 419/80/2 Bundle 1/3/147.

² This discreditable incident crowned a campaign of unprecedented bitterness, being precipitated by an Executive Council decision made by four ministers in Melbourne to reject several dubious regulations which Hughes desired to use to intimidate voters at the polls. The Prime Minister had them passed by another Council meeting in Sydney without informing the Governor-General, who was then present, of their earlier rejection and then sought to deny the whole episode when three of the ministers resigned in protest. The regulations were withdrawn at the last moment. Munro-Ferguson - Bonar-Law 30 October, 1916 Novar papers 696/248-50.

and followed naturally from the policy-making pattern which had emerged in the ALP by that time and which wartime conditions merely accentuated.

Conscription referendum
28 October, 1916

Are you in favor of the government having, in this grave emergency, the same powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?

Under voluntary voting the answer secured from the country was:

	NSW	VIC.	QLD.	S.A.	W.A.	TAS.	Federal Territories	Total
YES	356,805	353,930	144,200	87,924	94,069	48,493	2,136	1,087,557
NO	474,544	328,216	158,051	119,236	40,884	37,833	1,269	1,160,033

The split: November-December, 1916.

Hughes' essential strategy had been to prevent the opposition consolidating so that he could confront the state Labor parties with what was expected to be a popular endorsement of conscription. With the defeat of the referendum his personal position became gravely jeopardised after having escaped challenge, together with other expelled members, at the several caucus meetings in September. Action against the federal leadership through the federal organs of the ALP had not been ineffective meanwhile through lack of trying. Within a week of the announcement of the referendum NSW state executive requested the convening of a federal conference and won immediate support from the Queensland party.¹ It seems likely that Victoria also supported the call but it required the formal approval of at least four of the states and this was not forthcoming. Western Australia rejected the proposal on 18 September² and no reaction was recorded from either South Australia or Tasmania. Federal executive, a far less unwieldy body and especially designed to resolve such problems, also suffered from the same indecisiveness of some state leaderships and the rapidity of events. Although the federal president gave an explicit undertaking to convene it at the January meeting should a change of government policy be mooted, it had obviously suffered a decline of confidence after failing its first major test;

¹ Evans - Stewart 7 September, 1916 and McDonald - Stewart 8 September, 1916. Report ALP special federal conference, 1916. p. 18.

² Cornell - Stewart 21 September, 1916. Ibid.

moreover one Victorian member, Laurie Cohen, had yet to be replaced after his accidental death, while four other members were either conscriptionists or FPLP members implicated in the referendum decision¹ and the Western Australians were in any case hopelessly divided from top to bottom. Even after the referendum part-time federal secretary, Arch. Stewart, apologetically noted that

owing to two of the state executives, namely Tasmania and South Australia, having failed in their financial obligations to the federal executive, also to the fact that several of the representatives on the federal executive had been expelled by their state parties, it was impossible for the federal executive in its present position to take the necessary steps to convene a special conference.²

Some parliamentarians hoped that a federal intervention would prove unnecessary provided the FPLP placed its own house in order: Senator Gardiner wired Catts on the Monday following the referendum

Position critical. Could (state) executive be called to consider resolution to withdraw expulsion of all members provided loyally support Labor party and oppose further attempt to bring in conscription. This would prevent coalition of state parties and enable reconstruction federal government. We continue in office.³

The great problem however facing the anti-conscriptionists was determining how far to take any retributive action so as to appease the parties and movement, while preventing any drastic split which might permit Hughes to obtain his ends with non-Labor assistance. Other ministers such as Higgs entertained the idea that Hughes could be deposed but his supporters persuaded to stay and preserve the government⁴ but such a possibility was dismissed in a dry comment by F.J. Riley that 'this opinion is not held outside parliamentary circles.'⁵

¹ Hughes himself and J.D. Fitzgerald MLC from NSW, E.A. Anstey from S.A. and the Queensland Senator Tom Givens.

² Statement to Queensland leaders, Minutes Queensland state executive 10 November, 1916.

³ Gardiner - Catts 30 October, 1916. Catts papers MS 658/1/8a - 'Material relating to conscription, 1917'.

⁴ CPD 81. 23 February, 1917 p. 1065.

⁵ Daily Standard 31 October, 1 November, 1916.

The initiative was in fact seized by the federal party, Higgs and Gardiner arranging an FPLP meeting with the endorsement of conscriptionists and anti-conscriptionists to 'consider the good and welfare of the party' at a date originally set for Wednesday, 8 November. As the members began to drift back to Melbourne Hughes sounded out his remaining ministers and the anxious counting of numbers proceeded. By the end of the week the lines were reasonably distinct and the Hughes faction was accurately estimated at 24, or little more than one third of the total.¹ By this time the state executives were beginning to catch up, with the Victorian party taking the leading role. Early in November that executive carried four resolutions calling for support by the other states for a special federal conference and demanding an attitude of no reconciliation from its own parliamentary members.² A deputation carried these proposals to Sydney where the NSW executive gave its endorsement and following which Stewart went on to Brisbane and indicated that 'He was especially desirous that nothing in the way of reconciliation should be permitted between the Labor party and that section of it which had decided to support Mr. Hughes' conscription policy.' Queensland agreed to the federal conference proposal readily but wired to its FPLP members warning them that they 'should not take any action to compromise themselves or the party until such special interstate conference defines the attitude of the party generally.'³ Another delegate, E.F. Russell, was despatched to Adelaide and 'forcibly stated that the PLC is absolutely opposed to any policy of reconciliation with Mr. Hughes and his followers.'⁴ In South Australia the industrialist faction was in the ascendant and the party not only accepted the call⁵ but reported to the other states that it had instructed its federal parliamentarians that there must be 'no reconciliation' with

¹ Ibid. 7 November, 1916. This was one less than the eventual number of defectors. See H. McQueen, 'Who were the Conscriptionists? Notes on Federal Labor Members.' L.H. 16, May 1969 pp. 44-8 and 'Correction to Labour History No. 16.' L.H. 18, May, 1970 p. 60.

² Statement by A. Stewart, Minutes Queensland state executive 10 November, 1916.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Daily Herald 6 November, 1916.

⁵ Birrell - Stewart 6 November, 1916. Report ALP special federal conference, 1916 p. 19; Minutes ULP Council 9 November, 1916.

Hughes and the conscriptionists.¹ Western Australia and Tasmania also added their agreement to the call, making the matter unanimous.²

Anti-Hughes feeling continued to build in addition to the hardline attitudes adopted by the Victorian, South Australian and, it appears, the NSW parties. Resolutions rejecting Hughes' leadership began to flow from unions also, notably the National Executive of the All-Australian Anti-Conscription Trade Union Congress which passed a resolution timed to coincide with the impending FPLP meeting declaring 'as the view of the industrialist forces of the Commonwealth that nothing short of the removal of W.M. Hughes from the leadership of the FPLP and the endorsement of his expulsion from the Labor movement will meet with the approval of organised trade unionism.'³ With this mounting chorus of criticism of the Prime Minister remaining as Labor leader in the now super-heated atmosphere of Melbourne any intentions of leaving the matter to the federal conference broke down. On 14 November caucus met for the first time since the referendum and, contrary to the instructions of his Queensland executive, W.F. Finlayson led the attack against the leader. After defiant prompting from Hughes Finlayson moved the unprecedented motion, seconded by the Victorian J.F. Hannan, 'That Mr. W.M. Hughes no longer possesses the confidence of this party as leader and that the office of chairman of the party be, and is, hereby declared vacant.' Hughes and Givens made a brief attempt to have the motion ruled out of order but opinions were so aroused they were forced to give way and a cross section of the party representing all states spoke for the motion. As later recapitulated by a committee of members the grounds for no-confidence were advanced as follows:

1. That the fact that Mr. Hughes as Chairman refused to accept any resolutions or amendments respecting a war policy as against his dictation of a referendum for compulsory military training at the meeting of 24 August and succeeding days. After several days' sitting 23 members (a minority of the party) agreed at 2.30 a.m. that the Prime Minister might pass the referendum bill, on the understanding that every member should have a free hand to either support or oppose

¹ Ibid. and Stewart - Clementson Minutes W.A. state executive 5 November, 1916.

² Report ALP special federal conference, 1916 pp. 18-19.

³ Daily Standard 14 November, 1916.

before the public, and that the press censorship would not be exercised in a partisan manner. These conditions were not complied with. Ministers hostile to conscription were prevented from publicly opposing conscription unless they resigned from the cabinet and the censorship was exercised in a ruthlessly partisan manner.

2. That Mr. Hughes branded those advocating and supporting no-conscription generally as traitors in the pay of Germany, as enemies of their country and as being responsible for the policy of the IWW and that a leader who would hurl such unfounded charges against a majority of his own party was unfit to be their leader.

3. That Mr. Hughes alleged that unless the Labor movement adopted his policy, it was degenerate and unworthy, and that as the Labor movement did not endorse such policy, he should not continue to lead a movement he so maligned and misrepresented.

4. That the issue of regulations by Mr. Hughes on the eve of the polling designed to intimidate voters from exercising their franchise was a base betrayal of democracy, which showed him to be unfit to lead a great political party.

5. That Mr. Hughes, by his assumption of the role of dictator and his general conduct, was discredited throughout the country, and for the party to allow him to continue to lead it would mean ruin and disaster.¹

Mathew Charlton suggested a compromise to defer such precipitate action by inviting the six state executives to meet the FPLP 'to discuss the position as affecting the movement' and Senator O'Keefe foreshadowed a further amendment designed to confirm the status quo until federal conference could be convened.² Debate raged for some time but the advocates for the immediate deposition of Hughes had the bit between their teeth and refused to countenance further prevarication. In recognition of this development Hughes met with his closest confederates, Pearce and Givens, over the luncheon adjournment. To allow himself to be deposed as federal leader was both tactically and temperamentally inappropriate; rather the best hope lay in making the split as wide as possible so as to optimise his position in parliament. 'We agreed that

¹ 'Reply to Mr. Hughes. Labor Party's Official Statement.' Drafted by a committee comprising Tudor, Higgs, Mahon, McDonald and Catts and released under Tudor's signature on 15 November, 1916. W.A. state executive correspondence, file 68 - Interstate Labor conference, special, 1916.

² FPLP 14 November, 1916; Daily Herald 15 November, 1916.

the time had arrived for decisive action, that it was palpably impossible to hold the party together any longer, except at the price of surrender ... We determined not to surrender.'¹ When the session recommenced in the afternoon Hughes permitted the debate to continue further, but, divining no cooling of ardor on the part of his opponents, made a dramatic appeal for support and walked out of caucus. He was followed by 24 others, including Pearce, Jensen, Webster and Russell. Caucus unanimously carried Finlayson's motion forthwith, then decided to invite the federal conference to meet caucus representatives to determine the future of the party. On the following day O'Malley and Mahon tendered their own resignations from the ministry and Tudor narrowly defeated Charles McDonald for the position of new leader, the party resolving henceforth to sit on the opposition benches.²

<u>Federal parliament after 14 November, 1916.</u>			
<u>House</u>		<u>Senate</u>	
Labor	27	Labor	19
Liberal	34	Liberal	5
Hughes	13	Hughes	12
Ind.	1		
<hr/>		<hr/>	
75		36	

The 1916 special federal conference.

If the dispute in the party had come to a precipitate head within the FPLP on 14 November, the ALP federal conference - 'in effect, a round table council of war of party leaders'³ - was the only body which could make an authoritative ruling on the issue behind the split and enforce solidarity in the federal Labor movement. Originally intended for 27 November, the date of the special conference was postponed to the first week of December to permit the Western Australians time to arrive.⁴ The parties were invited to send delegates 'To deal with the present political situation in all its aspects' in Melbourne from 4 December, at the request of all states and on the authority of the

¹ Pearce, Carpenter to Cabinet. p. 140.

² FPLP 15 November, 1916; Daily Standard 16 November, 1916.

³ Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party p. 19.

⁴ See correspondence printed in the Report ALP special federal conference, 1916 pp. 18-19.

old federal executive, from which three members had now been expelled.¹ Queensland, NSW and Victorian state executives were adamantly against reconciliation and instructed their delegates accordingly; in South Australia the industrialists in the ULP Council forced adoption of a similar hard line and the Tasmanian state executive was also strongly anti-conscriptionist. All except S.A. had already expelled state and federal members and in the last case failure to do so sprang from tactical considerations rather than absence of determination. In Western Australia however the party was largely uninformed or misled as to the situation elsewhere, being uncertain about the business of conference until very late in November and under the impression even then that it had been assembled for conciliatory purposes rather than to formalise the divorce from Hughes and his followers. Reflecting this confusion was its hastily assembled federal delegation, selected by the W.A. state executive from the nominations of the District Councils, comprising three conscriptionists and three anti-conscriptionists. Senator Lynch had become a minister in the Hughes National Labor government and Reg. Burchell had also left the FPLP before winning selection on the delegation. Cornell held firmly to the prerogative of individual members of his party to determine their own position on the matter and of the other three only Alex. McCallum was aware from personal experience of the situation in the east. Instructions issued by the District Councils, which had formal control over individual members, generally favored some form of rapprochement with Hughes, with only one narrow exception.

Upon arrival in Melbourne the Western Australians were shocked to find the conscriptionist members being shunned by other delegates and questions were asked as to their eligibility on the first day of conference, when it was decided to let the full session handle the matter. On their home ground and with the pre-arranged concurrence of four other states the Victorians took the initiative at the commencement of the second day, submitting

That, as compulsory overseas military service is opposed to the principles embodied in the Australian Labor party's platform, all federal members who have supported compulsory

¹ Stewart - Clementson 18 November, 1916. W.A. state executive correspondence, file 68, Interstate Labor conference, special 1916.

overseas military service, or who are members of any other political party, are hereby expelled from the Australian Labor movement.¹

Such a declaration was designed to deal summarily and pitilessly with the FPLP supporters of Hughes and his policy, justified by the mover J.H. Scullin on the grounds that

the pledge of the Australian Labor party asked that a man should conform to the principles of the party, and anyone who had not carried out the principles should no longer be allowed to be a member of that party. Whether the exact words were on the platform or not was merely a quibble, because there was no doubt as to the spirit of the Labor movement on the subject ... no man could sneak away from the principles of the movement merely because something was not written down in black and white.²

Immediate opposition concentrated against the broad scope of the motion rather than the question of expelling the FPLP defectors and the Western Australians to a man protested, that as their state had left conscription up to individual consciences, the politicians who had espoused it could not fairly be penalised by the other states. As this sentiment became apparent another Victorian, R.H. Gill, sought to introduce an amendment 'That no delegate be allowed to sit on the conference who is not a member of the Australian Labor party.' This would have left W.A. and the South Australian party free to deal with conscriptionists in their own ranks by such devices as pre-selection scrutiny but after points of order were raised this was dropped and another amendment proposed by the Tasmanian Senators Ready and O'Keefe was ruled out of order.³ Despite a last minute appeal from Gardiner to separate the motion into two parts to deal with conscriptionists and defectors as two issues, the motion was put and carried by 29-4. Western Australians McCallum, Lutey and Gibson were supported solely by Gardiner in voting against it while Lynch, Burchell and Cornell abstained then left conference after it had passed.⁴

¹ In its successful form this was altered slightly in phraseology but not import. Report, 1916 pp. 4 and 10.

² Ibid. pp. 4-5.

³ 'That any member of the Australian Labor party who has joined or in future joins any other political party thereby ceases to be a member of the Australian Labor party.' Ibid. pp. 12-13.

⁴ Cornell was not strictly implicated as the other two were but walked out in protest against the principle. Ibid. p. 16.

Only after this business was disposed of did conference agree to a request made on the opening day by the FPLP to admit a delegation from the federal parliamentarians to address it. Caucus had been concerned ever since the walkout on 14 November over what it was to report to the highest organ of the ALP¹ and on the morning of Wednesday, 6 December Tudor led a small group into the conference to explain the situation. In a general address he argued for federal uniformity, stating that 'If machinery could be devised which would ensure harmony and unity of action, it would be a good thing for the Labor movement.' Senator Needham echoed these remarks:

There were times when action had to be taken quickly, and it was highly desirable that a uniform authoritative decision should have been arrived at without conflict of state view. Consultations between state and federal members and the federal executive could be arranged, perhaps, when interchange of opinions might be considered desirable.

Almost penitently he observed that 'They all belonged to the one Labor movement, their only differences lying in the spheres of action.' Some interrogation of the deputation followed and it then withdrew² but the issues of methods of control and supervision of the FPLP thus raised by the caucus leaders themselves in the light of the circumstances surrounding the referendum decision were to be pursued later. The ALP constitution was referred to the federal executive for consideration of alterations and amendments³ and on Thursday Rae and Carey suggested that the two Victorian federal executive delegates be empowered to liaise closely with the FPLP leadership during parliamentary sittings in Melbourne. It was proposed that they be able 'to consider all matters appertaining to the political situation until the next triennial conference, and they communicate promptly with each state executive on matters of importance that may arise from time to time.' This was knocked out however after Western Australian delegates protested that it would circumvent the federal executive, representing all of the states.⁴

¹ FPLP 15, 27 November, 1916.

² Report, 1916 pp. 16-17.

³ Ibid. p. 19.

⁴ Ibid. p. 22.

Later on still more detailed proposals for the internal functioning and external monitoring of the FPLP were submitted by the Queensland delegates, on the basis of their state executive resolutions prior to the conference.

That a definite constitution for the ALP be drawn up by conference.

That the Australian Political Labor Executive have more defined powers similar to those possessed by state executives, also power to take action on matters upon which the platform and constitution are silent, but which may arise at any time and may effect the well-being of the people.

That the FPLP furnish to the APLE a precis of general business done at each caucus meeting.¹

These suggestions were amplified into a specific set of propositions aimed at remedying the inadequacies of the federal ALP structure revealed in the conscription crisis. It is unclear who was the responsible author, although it was possibly the federal executive itself or the agenda committee during the overnight adjournment: while some merely codified what had been caucus practice others marked novel departures from past operation.

Special meetings of the party may be convened by requisition to the secretary.

- (1) If parliament is sitting, by twelve members.
- (2) If parliament is not sitting, by one-third of the members.
- (3) In each case sufficient notice shall be given to provide for the meetings being convened.

Ministers and officers of the FPLP shall be elected by exhaustive ballot, and portfolios allocated by the caucus at a duly constituted meeting.

Every Labor minister or officer, or member of any committee of the party, shall exercise his own judgement and vote in caucus meetings, notwithstanding that a cabinet or any committee shall have arrived at a majority decision. No action of any kind whatsoever will be taken to interfere with the freedom of a minority of a cabinet or any committee in the caucus meetings of the party.

All business arising at party caucus meetings shall be decided by each member exercising his own unfettered judgement by speech and vote.

- (a) Provision shall be made for private members to initiate and complete public business, including legislation.

¹ Minutes Queensland state executive 20 November, 1916.

(b) Simplification of parliamentary procedure and standing orders to expedite public business.

That the APLE be empowered to appoint a representative who may attend all meetings of the federal Labor caucus and supply confidential reports to the central executive of each state.

That the FPLP should furnish to the APLE a precis of general business done at each caucus meeting.¹

Some considerable care had obviously gone into the framing of these measures, testifying to the concern felt over the operations of the federal party, but the chances for imposing such controls upon the FPLP were not good: they trespassed upon the independence traditionally enjoyed by the federal members and cannot have appealed to the 12 of the 33 delegates who were themselves parliamentarians in state of federal spheres and the two others who were former federal members. The conference report does not record whether any debate took place on them, merely that all proposals were referred to the federal executive for further consideration. Although this body met during the conference sessions it failed to hold another business session until November, 1918 and the recommendations languished accordingly. Nevertheless they were of significance as indicative of the dissatisfaction with the FPLP engendered during the whole conscription debacle.

As it was a special conference with little by way of a detailed agenda having been compiled, the conference took the advice of the agenda committee to define its area of responsibility, unanimously resolving 'That all matters arising out of the conscription issue may be discussed and decided at this conference.' Almost immediately the scope of this self-limitation was tested when two Tasmanians sought to amend the defence plank by affirming party policy to be compulsory military training at home and voluntary service overseas. The president, E.J. Holloway, ruled this out of order as being ultra vires, 'a usurpation of the functions of the ordinary triennial conference,' and this was upheld despite an appeal and a lengthy debate.² Much of the remaining two and a half days was therefore confined to non-policy matters, although the war was inevitably touched on. Requests from the Victorian section of the Australian Peace Alliance and a Melbourne PLC branch for conference

¹ Ibid. pp. 24-25.

² Ibid. p. 19.

to receive delegations on the issue of peace were turned down but a resolution proposed by Arthur Rae of NSW was endorsed, briefly encapsulating the Peace Alliance position:

That this conference, in the interests of humanity, is of opinion that Great Britain and her Allies should formulate their joint demands upon the Central European powers and publish them to the world, and thus pave the way for an early and honorable peace.¹

This laconic acknowledgement of over two years of war revealed the current state of ALP opinion which had only just begun to advance beyond general, if grudging, support for the conflict. Within another twelve months the demand for peace would grow far more insistent until actual opposition to the war became the chief question at issue.

Next day Rae authored another proposal comprising the first indication of unease with the Imperial connection to be expressed at the highest level in the party.

That any proposal for Imperial Federation involving the slightest surrender of Australia's self-governing powers in return for a voice in the Empire's foreign policy would be disastrous to Australia's ideals and should not, therefore, be entertained.

Fellow NSW member Arthur Blakeley of the AWU seconded this and

said that he was not altogether satisfied with the steadfastness of British statesmen to the white Australia ideals, and if, as Australians, they took part in any Imperial Council, they would be bound in honor to observe the decisions of such a Council. Supposing a decision of the Council ran counter to white Australian ideals, where would they be?²

Delegates did not object to Imperial co-operation in principle, rather the 'hopeless complications' it might entail and the motion was carried.³ This marked a substantial divergence from Hughes' approach of moving into ever closer involvement and emphasis on harmonising of interests with Great Britain as a means to secure future protection from that source; Labor was moving to a rejection of that attitude and assertion of distinct Australian interests of such importance as to warrant pursuing

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. p. 21.

³ Ibid. p. 22.

a far more cautious line on engagement in Imperial quarrels. This was most vividly expressed in the later years of the war and was transmuted later still into a strong isolationist trend within the Labor movement.

The 1916 special federal conference marked a watershed for the party in terms of future policies, but in their initial form these remained - always apart from opposition to conscription - rather vaguely defined. It was the intention to hold an ordinary federal conference in June, 1917 to further elaborate the ALP's position but circumstances dictated that it was to be another eighteen months before the parties once again convened in June, 1918. This gap between what was in essence the emergency conference in Melbourne and the regular conference at Perth proved to be a crucial period for the Labor movement, during which the chief question on the agenda became not merely the best and most appropriate means of participation in the war but whether or not to support involvement in it at all.

CHAPTER TWO

The ALP as a confederal party - the stories of six states

So far defence and foreign policy making has been examined from the point of view primarily of the federal party, with the conscription issue marking the first significant deviation from the supremacy of that party in these areas. Divided within itself upon the issue the FPLP agreed to refer the question to the nation at large, and it was Hughes' intention to employ the referendum device as a means to coerce the Labor parties by appealing over their heads to the general public. Anti-conscription feeling and opposition to Hughes himself stemmed from the states in varying intensities during 1916 and in this process the confederal nature of the ALP came to be most fully realised. While opposition to conscription was determined in the eastern states, only the Victorian and N.S.W. parties had threatened disciplinary action in advance against any parliamentarian who supported it; the attitudes of Queensland and Tasmania became quite clear also but South Australia and Western Australia remained equivocal. The reactions of the states were then dissimilar and the experience of each party must be examined individually in order to assess the impact of the crisis upon the ALP. Here then are six separate stories elaborating the course of the crisis in each state and the implications of it, not only for the ALP attitude to compulsory military service alone, but, in the longterm, for the policy of the Australian Labor movement towards participation in the war itself.

VICTORIA, 1914 - 1918

The Background

The Labor party in Victoria distinguished itself from other state parties by achieving a consistent lack of electoral success. Irrespective of its reasonable performance in the federal sphere the formation of a state government, apart from one miserable affair lasting a fortnight and occasioned by temporary differences within the non-Labor camp, was an experience yet to be savored and at the election in 1914 the PLP had reduced the number of seats contested and secured less than 40% of the vote. Subsequently a Labor ministry of four months' duration survived in 1924, there was another brief affair in 1927 - 8 and an ill-fated Depression ministry, totalling in all less than five years of office during the first fifty years of Labor party life in Victoria. Such a dismal record, it has been suggested, was more the result of persistent misfortune than culpable leadership or a perversely anti-Labor electorate but stands nevertheless as a salient feature of Victorian politics. [1] Prior to the war this can be explained by the singular concentration of Labor electoral supporters in the metropolitan area, a weightage of electorates favoring the country and Labor's inclination to concede such seats to their opponents. On the basis of the inevitable comparison with N.S.W., the Victorian unions were mainly craft-based and inclined accordingly to be more parochial, conservative and unenterprising than larger industrial organisations. There was a lack of tension between the PLP and unions such as existed in the neighbouring states of N.S.W., S.A. and Tasmania and a consequent focus upon the federal parliament, in Melbourne until 1927, where victories were immediately tangible. State executive was a stable mixture of unionists, politicians and branch members enjoying a notable continuity of tenure of the fifteen metropolitan seats and the five country seats, whose occupants were required only to attend the quarterly meetings. State conference met

[1] Discussed by D.W. Rawson 'Victoria, 1910 - 66: Out of Step or Merely Shuffling?' H.S. 13, 49 October, 1967 pp.60-75; J.Rydon 'Victoria 1910 - 1966: Political Peculiarities' H.S.13, 50 April, 1968 pp.233-236

annually, attracting 160 - 170 delegates but usually lasted for only the three days over Easter, inevitably leaving executive to run the party with rarely challenged authority. Largest single affiliated union was the Victoria-Riverina branch of the A.W.U. and it regularly supplied ten or so delegates at state conference and invariably 4 - 5 state executive members. Victoria was at least a well-integrated party without substantial sections of the movement harboring resentments of under-representation, such as provoked powerful forces against the entrenched leadership of the three contiguous states and had been avoided in Queensland by steps leading up to the 1916 reforms. [1]

Little by way of ideological disturbance challenged this situation, the major channel of doctrinal influence upon unions and party stemming from the Victorian Socialist Party, established in 1905 by visiting British radical Tom Mann with the object not of competing with the Labor party politically but forming an educative force within both the party and electorate. When this strategy was reversed in 1908 the running of socialist nominees against Labor candidates failed ignominiously and by the time of the war this lesson had become engrained in the experience of members, though still occasionally disputed by a radical section. Labor was acknowledged as deficient in many respects as a working class party but was to be preferred to other less amenable parties and the VSP pursued a role as a propagandising body seeking promotion and dissemination of 'a knowledge of the economics, ethics and politics of international socialism', particularly through the Socialist, a weekly edited in 1914 by leading member R.S. Ross, and sustained by a variety of social activities which enabled solidarity amongst its small group of hard-core supporters.

[2] As the largest and most important single independent organisation within the Victorian movement the VSP derived support from a diffuse but interlocking group of individuals in Melbourne's socialist/Christian-pacifist/humanist intelligentsia which had connections with some craft unions. [3]

[1] Rawson 'Victoria 1910 - 1966,' op.cit. and 'The Organisation of the Australian Labor Party, 1916 - 1941. Ph.D. Melbourne, 1954.

[2] I. Turner, 'Socialist Political Tactics, 1900 - 1920'. L.H. 2 May, 1962 pp.5-25.

[3] S. Blackburn, Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labor Party. Canberra, 1969 pp.5-6.

Other organisations of note included the Australian Freedom League, opposed to compulsory military training, the revolutionary Australian Socialist party and IWW, the Women's Political Association and others. While all of these were active organisations the VSP exercised greatest influence over the Labor party, primarily because of its provision over the years of a cadre of party and union leaders, many of whom remained members or loose associates after having moved into broader areas. These included key men such as Frank Hyett and P. Hickey of the Victorian Railways' Union, E.J. Russell of the Victorian branch, Agricultural Implement Makers' Union, John Curtin, Timber Workers', the Rev. F.W. Sinclair, E.J. Holloway, THC and Labor state executive, Maurice Blackburn, MLA, also of the executive, and others who acknowledged a VSP background.

Reactions in the VSP to the evolution of Labor's defence policy was mixed, with Maurice Blackburn, editor of the Socialist until 1913, differing from his pacifist or Marxist fellows in defending compulsory training upon the same lines used in the Labor party itself and even in July, 1914 when the VSP declared opposition to conscription in any form whatever as 'an obstacle in the way of working class advancement and the realisation of universal brotherhood', there were some still prepared to support it under certain conditions. [1] More determined was the Australian Freedom League, formed in 1912 and including Sinclair and unionists J.B. Howie and T.J. Miller, which spread Christian-pacifist principles and won support in most states as resistance to the Defence Act began to develop. [2] Miller especially was an important figure, having emigrated from Britain after having been secretary of the Independent Labour Party and heavily influenced by Robert Blatchford, Keir Hardie and the Quakers. As representative of the Painters' Union on the Melbourne Trades Hall Council he began agitation there against compulsory training after finding, far from a congenial anti-militarist environment, that many unions regarded the Defence Act as one of Labor's positive contributions and were rather proud of it. Nevertheless Miller

[1] VSP Minutes, 30 June, 28 July, 1914

[2] L.C. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia, London 1935
p.69

did win the support of THC radicals such as Hyett, E.J. Holloway and F.J. Riley [1] and by early 1914 the THC was forwarding protests against certain aspects of the scheme. [2] Still, there was a long way to go: when Freedom League propaganda was circulated at the Labor state conference of 1914 the party merely endorsed the detail criticisms of the Act forwarded by the Western Australian party.

An encouraging development in popularising its international outlook was the VSP success in circulating to trade unions the Hardie-Vaillant resolution of the Second International suggesting, inter alia, a general strike of workers in response to an outbreak of war and enclosing questions as to the unions' attitudes to compulsory training and receptivity to a general strike strategy. [3] At the Trades Hall Curtin succeeded in obtaining approval for the International policy, on behalf of a claimed 170,000 workers

as the most effectual in preventing wars between nations and (it) further emphasises the oneness of the interests of the workers of all countries as against the interests of the capitalist exploiters of any country and pledges itself to work for the economic organisation of the working class on the lines laid down to the end that the existing parasitic battenning on armaments as a means to huge profit making by the armaments ring cease. [4]

Such sentiments came to nought when war broke out and the VSP decided to support the federal Labor party, despite its attitude, as the best option in the circumstances. The Victorian party's weekly Labor Call characterised the pessimism of the movement in its editorials.

The workers have nothing to gain in the evidently coming slaughter but all to lose. It is a notorious fact that where wars have raged, the privileges that it has taken the workers years to gain are knocked over like so many skittles.

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[1] T.J. Miller, Some Reflections. Melbourne, 1938, pp.58-9

[2] THC Minutes 19 March, 11 June, 1914

[3] Jauncey op.cit. p 91

[4] VSP circular 6 March, 1914. Ross papers MS 3222 JAF 56/1/16

[5] THC Minutes 26 March, 28 May 1914. C. Gray, Secretary Melbourne THC - Secretary International Socialist Bureau, Brussels 2 June 1914. Ross Papers op.cit. JAF 56/1/5

Where it is all going to end, no one can tell; but who is going to pay for it, everybody can give a good guess -- the workers. They will have to pay in blood and toil. They will be food for power and shot whilst the war is on; and they are to be the victims who are to be sweated to raise the cash again to replenish the coffers of the state and Fat and Co. This applies to workers the world over, no matter who wins. [1]

With this background Victoria produced the earliest and most varied array of anti-war and anti-conscription bodies.

Strongest and earliest response came in August-September from the AFL, VSP and other groups in the formation of the Australian Peace Alliance. For these organisations this was initially as much a defensive step as a positive counter to the war, as explained by founding member and principal organiser T.J. Miller in describing reactions by Melbourne pacifists, who

met and considered the whole situation and decided that an organisation be formed which we named the Australian Peace Alliance, and though it had an educational objective in matters of the moment ... it was also a protective force, as, if any of the thirty or so organisations comprising it were in any way attacked, the others would stand by them. [2]

The Alliance quickly expanded its support amongst Labor branches and some unions as an indigenous response to the outbreak of war paralleling the Union of Democratic Control in Britain and dedicated itself to propagandist activities in support of an early peace upon democratic conditions designed to prevent outbreak of similar conflicts. [3] Any idea of industrial action was clearly regarded as improbable and in fact the APA platform devised in late 1914 - early 1915 was quite moderate as to methods and highly idealistic as to objectives. Interstate expansion during 1915 from its Melbourne base, where the THC had affiliated with it, gave the Alliance wide coverage but it was limited by the naivety of its assumptions and failure in its program to grapple with the hard

[1] Ibid 13 August, 1914

[2] Some Reflections pp 58-9

[3] J. Merritt, 'The Australian Peace Alliance, 1914-1922' Work-in-progress paper, History RSSS ANU 27 October, 1964. By permission of the author.

realities of international relations generally and of Australia's situation in particular: its best work lay in contributing to the general fund of ideas on the war so that, when agitation on that topic began in earnest, its proposals were well known and long established. As a guide to action and initiator of essential ideas the Alliance was of limited value.

In addition to expansion of the APA a number of other organisations were formed in 1915 with related purposes. At the initiative of the Melbourne branch of the Australian Socialist Party an Anti-Conscription and Anti-Militarist League was established in July in anticipation of conscription for overseas service, supported by the VSP and other socialists and also propagandist in methods. [1] Simultaneously, a No-Conscription Fellowship was founded with organisational assistance by R.S. Ross and several unionists, essentially a draft resisters' union initially based upon religious objections to violence but later broadening the basis of its appeal. [2] Other prominent participants in this early phase of activity were those in the Women's Peace Army (based upon the previous Womens' Political Association) led by Vida Goldstein, Cecilia John and Adela Parkhurst, which adopted elements of both VSP and Peace Alliance platforms and in turn contributed distinctly feminist demands to the other radical organisations. [3] Nationally, the socialist women engaged in organisational activities at least equal to those of Bob Ross and T.J. Miller.

Without a state Labor government to concern it dissatisfactions within the Victorian movement focussed naturally upon the federal government. Trades Hall complaints concentrated upon suspension of Labor's legislative program, made doubly necessary under wartime disruption and the unfairly distributed burden of war, [4] but moves

[1] Turner, 'Socialist Political Tactics' op.cit. VSP Minutes 26 July, 9 August, 1915

[2] Labor Call 21 October, 1915

[3] Womens' Peace Army Leaflet No.1. No Conscription! Molesworth papers Uncat MSS 243/3 Anti-Conscription League dodgers, 1916; also M. Brodney, 'Militant Propagandists of the Labor Movement'. L.H. 5 November 1963 pp.11-17

[4] THC Minutes 15, 22 July 1915

for declarations against compulsory military service did not bear fruit until later that year when the THC endorsed a resolution for submission at an APA public meeting urging utmost resistance to compulsory service. [1] Similarly, the state executive was greatly hostile to abandonment of the constitutional referenda at the end of the year, for which campaign the party was already fully geared. Events took a violent turn when the THC recommended members to ignore the war census cards distributed nationally [2] and the initiator of the resolution, F. Katz, assistant secretary of the Clerks' Union, was assaulted by a gang of soldiers at Trades Hall. Council vehemently protested this and other examples of suppression of opinion but expunged the resolution after it was pointed out that it was a direct incitement to break the law on compulsory return of census cards. [3]

Discontent with the war not only centered upon convictions of the inequality of sacrifice, opposition to compulsory service as tending to widen that disparity, or the poor performance of federal Labor criticised with great acerbity in the Call. By 1915 the Labor weekly was carrying an increasing number of articles and editorials upon the commercial and immigration challenge posed by Japan, especially by writers such as W. Wallis and Frank Anstey, and directly linking these issues with conscription. Despite the censorship these articles became increasingly strident, even vicious, in tone, readers being continually warned that 'The Japanese are out for trade expansion and territory, and it beholds (sic) Australia to be on the qui vive ...' compared to Germany 'We think Japan is, and always has been more dangerous economically, industrially and nationally.'⁴ Anti-war

[1] Ibid. 16 September, 1915

[2] THC Minutes 9 December, 1915

[3] Ibid. 20 January, 1916

[4] Labor Call 2 March, 1916

sentiments and opposition to conscription were strongly evident trends in Victoria by 1916, it only remaining to be determined how far this opinion would translate into decisive action; in turn this depended upon the effectiveness of radical groups within the party as to how far state conference and state executive would venture.

Factionalism in Victoria

At the beginning of the crucial year of 1916 there was no rank and file insurgency in Victoria as had developed out of the struggle for recognition of dissatisfied and disadvantaged union and branch demands within the N.S.W. and South Australian Labor parties, nor was there a strong parliamentary leadership maintaining the policy initiative as in the Queensland and Tasmanian parties. On the other hand, there were a number of groups in the Victorian party possessing varying degrees of indirect influence: the A.P.A., planning and organising for its first federal conference in Melbourne at Easter, which had adopted methods of education and propaganda in its role as an attitude group; the Anti-Conscription and Anti-Militarism League and No-Conscription Fellowship, which were also attitude and self-protection groups; the V.S.P. with its cautious approach to relationships with the Labor party, and even the Wren machine. Given the climate of opinion these groups encouraged and articulated it would nevertheless have been largely up to the state executive to determine party policy on conscription unless deliberate efforts were made to prescribe its behaviour. Conditions for the development of such attempts were at first sight unencouraging, the Victorian state executive having pursued a strict, distinctly hostile approach towards intra-party opinion aggregation by organised factions. Trouble had arisen in the party in preceding years with the emergence of organised Catholics and other, more amorphous groups such as the one animated by H.E. Langridge, which had for years sought to arrange the numbers at state conference to have employees barred

from membership of the Labor party. [1] This slightly eccentric concern on the part of the 'Wage Earners' Group of Members of the A.L.P.' for a 'pure-bred wage earner party' had resulted in quite large, but always insufficient blocs of votes at conferences for its perennially recurring motions and with such a limited scope seemed harmless enough.

The former group were of much greater significance. Battle had already been joined in previous years when members of the laymen's Catholic Federation, officially supported by Archbishop Carr and Coadjutor Archbishop Mannix, [2] had attempted to pressurise Labor candidates with the object of forcing a change in Labor's education plank in favor of state aid. As a threat both to Labor's organisational integrity and an incitement to sectarianism state executive expelled all members of the Federation and took the opportunity to simultaneously proscribe a miscellaneous collection of other groups, including the Victorian Alliance, the Licensed Victuallers' Association, Loyal Orange Lodge and Womens' Political Association. [3] The Wage Earners also came within the rubric of this indiscriminate dragnet ordered by state president Laurie Cohen, who decreed on the basis of party rule

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- [1] It was described by Langridge himself as 'A very loosely organised body, seldom holding meetings but acting through the consultation of the most active spirits by the honorary secretary who has been able to devote a large amount of time to waiting on them as to their ideas; mainly officials in both industrial and political departments of organised labor. Its loyalty is unimpeachable and unquestioned.' Letter to Labor Call 30 March, 1916.
 - [2] Ibid. 4 November, 1915.
 - [3] Annual Report, Victorian state executive, 1916.

38 J [1] 'that no members of the P.L.C. had the right to constitute themselves an official "group" of the Australian Labor party'. This was upheld on appeal at a subsequent executive meeting. Later that year the North Carlton branch of the P.L.C. attempted to call a protest meeting of other branches on the occasion of Hughes' abandonment of the referenda and state executive acted swiftly again to assert its authority, declaring such action unconstitutional and defending its own stand on the matter. Following personal visits by Cohen this action was dropped. [2]

Undaunted, both Wage Earners and Catholics continued to organise and the Catholics especially set about highly effective work in the unions and branches with a view to securing a distinct Catholic bloc at the 1916 Labor conference. They acted through a Catholic Workers' Association formed on 1 September, 1915 under the encouragement of the hierarchy and were successful at the next state conference of the P.L.C. in obtaining a more favorable rephrasing of the education plank. Following this victory however they did not sustain as a permanent faction in the Labor party and organised Catholic action faded from consideration for some time. Both organisations did succeed in raising at the 1916 conference the whole issue of factions within the party, Langridge having put the case for a pluralist party most succinctly in the preceding weeks.

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- [1] Providing that 'No person shall be eligible to become or permitted to remain a member of the PLC who is a member of any other organisation which selects or lends support to candidates for public positions.' PLC Rules, 1915. This had been especially passed as an amendment at the 1915 state conference on the recommendation of state executive specifically to deal with the Catholic Federation problem. C. Hamilton, 'Catholic Interests and the Labor Party: Organised Catholic Action in Victoria and NSW, 1910-1916.' H.S. 33, 9 November, 1959 pp.62-73. Also P.J. O'Farrell, The Catholic Church in Australia. Melbourne, 1968 pp. 210 - 212.
- [2] Labor Call 4 May, 1916.

A little reflection will show us that all the unpreventable concerted action by members within any political party for a particular reform or plank would be better in organised form, both for the group itself, and to allow of the administrative body of the party communicating with those persons better than with a 'hole and corner' activity, with no recognised head, body or tail. Of course groups, to be legitimate must exclude no insider or include no outsider; be open to only - but all - members of the party.

We shall conclude also that the more of such groups there are in a party, the more important it must be regarded, since those deeply concerned and active about the respective matters grouped upon (sic) use that party in preference to other political parties to achieve their ends. [1]

The Clerks' Union had already announced its intention of moving at conference 'such motions as would have the effect of affirming Labor's recognition of legitimate organised bodies' like the Wage Earners, which the executive had proscribed as unconstitutional, 'all group action being deemed by them as disruptive.' [2] The initiative was taken in conference by a Catholic AWU delegate, J.H. Scullin, moving with the assistance of E.J. Hogan, MLA, that rule 38 J be deleted. Scullin argued that full freedom should be accorded to individuals in moral, religious or social organisations to belong to Labor, contending that the party was big enough and commonsense sufficient to prevent its capture by any one section. FPLP members Parker Maloney and Frank Anstey also favored deletion but it was finally resolved by 124-30 votes at the suggestion of another AWU man, T.P. Holloway, to retain discretionary powers by slightly amending the rule to sanction group activity while preventing disruption. [3]

[1] Ibid. 30 March, 1916

[2] Ibid.

[3] Rule 38 J was amended to permit expulsion of anyone whose conduct was deemed contrary to the principles and solidarity of Labor, or who violated the membership pledge to faithfully uphold the party constitution and platform and to vote and work for the return of Labor candidates. Ibid. 11 May, 1916.

This victory for the advocates of an open party was important in reversing the trend to increasing intolerance of intra-party organisations and secured the position of another group which had been organising since early in the year with altogether more serious implications for Labor's platform and policy. Since 1914 there had been dissatisfaction with the content of Labor policy on the part of a number of trade union officials deploring its insufficient radicalism and despite the avenues already open of syndicalism, anti-reformist socialism and moderate democratic socialism provided by the IWW, ASP and VSP respectively. The self-styled Militant Propagandists of the Labor Movement consciously regarded themselves as an elite.

The Militants are the more advanced section in the political and industrial activities and desire that this movement should proceed in an organised direction on Definite and Direct Lines that will hasten an improvement in the workers' conditions. [1]

Notably absent was a platform of specific objects, a rigorous ideology or social analysis but rather a belief in the need for a vague 'gingering up' of the party. As their name implied the Militants

believed 'a place must be found inside the Labor party for militant propaganda and action of a revolutionary character upon fundamental and burning questions of the day'. Chief figure behind the body was Jack Cosgrave, secretary of the small Cycle Trades Union who believed in the necessity of a radicalising influence 'to make Labor leaders fight and rouse rebellion in the rank and file of organised workers against those who would nail Labor to the cross'. Lacking a developed social critique the objects of the Militants were vague and eclectic, appealing to those Laborites 'absolutely opposed to conscription and (who) places internationalism before nationalism and will fight to abolish capitalism etc.' [2]

[1] Ibid. 11 May, 1916

[2] Report second meeting Militants, Labor Call
9 March, 1916.

If it makes you burn like the fires of sin,
 Brother, you're fit for the ranks - fall in!

At Cosgrave's insistence the Militants, initially comprising some 50 supporters, stressed from the start their bona fides as loyal Laborites, meeting at Trades Hall not merely for convenience but to deliberately win legitimacy within the movement as the key to effectiveness. Despite early fears about expulsions and a temporary withdrawal of the use of Trades Hall premises, this constant emphasis upon loyalty and avoidance of clandestinity by publication of proceedings in the Call and Socialist paid off, the Militants being favorably mentioned by state secretary Arch. Stewart and Parker Maloney at the 1916 state conference.

Recognition as an integral and valid group within the Labor party was a basic requirement for the Militants' modus operandi, a considerable advance upon that employed before in Victoria. At the fourth weekly meeting it was resolved

1. That membership be limited to those Laborites affiliated either with the THC, PLC or Eight Hours Committee who are prepared to further the interests of existing Labor organisations by militant propaganda.
2. That a Militants' Roll be established for systematic use showing names and organisations and in relation thereto that membership cards will be issued for those who will enrol yet cannot attend meetings.

Normal publicity and propagandising activities would be pursued but the salient organisational feature would be the Roll of members, as explained by Cosgrave:

Without recognised leaders, but by meeting and deciding on concerted action, the militants will initiate, where necessary, and by systematic use of the 'Militants' Roll', place a statement and give a lead upon fundamental questions and issues of the day that will force the fighting. As the roll is made more complete any important question can be made a burning one to grip the attention of Labor organisations... We conceive that the supreme

need of the moment is organisation, not to propogate specific panaceas, methods or cults, or that certain institutions as now rigidly circumscribed must be preserved, but intelligent expression and direction of class aspirations and instincts, assuming solidarity upon fundamentals of working class emancipation. [1]

This mode of operation more closely approximated that of the successful insurgents in N.S.W. and S.A., although not intended to effect basic changes in power structures as in those state parties. At the same time it offered the opportunity for a more direct and effective influence upon the party in Victoria than that of the other organised attitude groups at the time when the conscription issue reached its maximum importance. Already the thrust of the Militants' answer to conscription was apparent, Cosgrave having divided the THC in July, 1915 over an APA inspired proposal in favor of Britain declaring terms for a peace settlement. [2] Early in 1916 he and his supporters approached Frank Hyett, secretary of the Railways Union and VSP veteran, to support a plan for a general strike should conscription be imposed by regulation. Hyett had however moved the far more moderate proposal that the THC call a national union conference to discuss conscription and the Militants' proposal put as an amendment was defeated in favor of the conference idea. [3] At the next meeting however it was resolved on the chairman's casting vote to refer to the unions for approval presentation to the government of a policy calling for all workers in all countries to take simultaneous action to force their rulers to openly pronounce their terms for peace negotiations. [4] Hyett's scheme was meanwhile rapidly implemented with circulars and personal emissaries being sent interstate to arrange the conference for early May, [5] but the Militants' radical proposals were not to be allowed to lapse.

[1] Ibid. 23 March, 1916.

[2] THC Minutes 29 July, 1915.

[3] Ibid. 2 March, 1916

[4] Ibid. 16 March, 1916

[5] Ibid. 30 March, 13 April, 1916.

Victorian Labor and conscription

Prior to the annual Victorian Labor conference at Trades Hall, 21 - 24 April, the Militants organised their forces after a committee appointed on 25 March had investigated the establishment of a bloc vote on their special areas of concern, designated as peace, conscription, 'war against war', organisation of women and equal pay, exclusion of employers from the party, restriction of parliamentary representatives on party conferences and state executive and party discipline. [1] Following consideration of the agenda a meeting of sympathetic delegates was held but it is unclear what proportion of the total delegates this comprised or how solid were its votes. Right from the opening of conference and the acting-state president's address [2] in which Holloway warned that if the government adopted conscription 'the rank and file of the Labor movement would be finished with the Labor party', it was clear that the question would not be whether to oppose conscription but rather how far to take that opposition. After deploring abandonment of the referenda by the FPLP a simple declaration of opposition to compulsory service was passed; then the AWU delegates, McNeill and Mottram, proposed that action be taken against parliamentary transgressors of this policy.

During consideration of alternative proposals Cosgrave and Katz placed the Militants' policy before conference:

That in the event of any attempt on the part of the authorities to introduce conscription in any form, conference recommends to unions and PLC branches that they reply by a general strike.

Holloway pointed out that this could only be a recommendation, not a directive, and it was defeated after further discussion 86 - 55.

[1] Labor Call 30 March, 1916.

[2] E.J. Holloway succeeded to the post after Cohen's accidental death in February and was confirmed for a full term by conference.

Victorian Labor's attitude on conscription became forthwith

That this conference absolutely pledges itself to oppose conscription of human life, and that it be a direction from this conference to the various PLC branches and unions throughout Victoria to take immediate action to select candidates to contest the next election in opposition to all Labor members who vote in favor of conscription, and that the unions and branches in other states be asked to take similar action, and in the event of such action not being taken by the branches or unions, the central executive be instructed by this conference to refuse to endorse the nominations.

Both state and federal Victorian politicians can have been in little doubt as to party policy henceforward.

Debate was later held over peace prospects on a motion calling for mutual disclosure of all belligerents' positions; the Militants replied with the same proposal they had pushed in the THC and now won approval for it by 72 - 69, an effort to recommit this lapsing for want of time. The resolution asked that Pearce be approached as acting-Prime Minister for assistance in transmitting internationally the following declaration:

This conference, representing 200,000 Labor electors organised to secure the full result of their industry to all wealth producers by the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, sends fraternal greetings to organised workers in every country and implores them to immediately take simultaneous action to force their respective governments to openly pronounce themselves upon the terms of peace and a time for negotiation.

A motion for abolition of Labor's compulsory training defence plank was defeated after brief discussion once the threat to white Australia had been invoked. The Militants' ticket for state executive also met some success, notably with election of Cosgrave to that body, an advantage lost however when the latter's ill-health excluded him from further activity. These results justified the Militants' claim that they had 'made themselves felt' but even without exact knowledge of their floor strength it was apparent that their influence had not been central. Very largely this was because the Victorian party was already radicalised over conscription, comparatively speaking, and the only direct success in policy terms which it is possible

to attribute to the Militants was the peace resolution, and even this must have been recognised as impracticable whatever credit the Victorian party could claim for its early stand upon the issue. Overall, the Militants' not inauspicious debut in party councils encouraged them to further pursue their objectives within the movement at large.

In anticipation of the imminent national union conference the Militants decided days after the state party conference

to initiate immediately a bold, determined campaign among unions (and the conscription conference) for the general strike as the one weapon the workers have to defy laws that conscribe them to the service of capitalism and smash the design of the traitorous politicians and publicists who would use the war situation to fetter the pioneering democracy in Australia. [1]

Secure once again in the Trades Hall premises they held their largest meeting yet on 6 May and decided to circularise all delegates to the union conference warning them of the possibility of conscription being imposed 'by some crafty and insidious method' and suggesting the general strike response, even to its grim conclusion -

Should conscription become law by any means, in spite of the pronounced opposition of organised labor, the government will thus challenge organised revolt, and have to take the lives of those who will uphold the basic working class principles at any cost. [2]

Other forces were also at work in soliciting support, notably the APA which circulated material nationally seeking to exert pressure upon the FPLP [3] but the effectiveness of such methods was doubtful, according to the APA organiser, T.J. Miller, in pre-determining the results:

I was surprised to find so many representatives who had not reached a decision or the unions they belonged to had not done so; in fact, some actually agreed to conscription, especially if it meant conscription of wealth also. [4]

[1] Labor Call 4 May, 1916

[2] Mercury 12 May, 1916

[3] Daily Standard 19 April, 1916

[4] Some Reflections pp.60 - 1.

Of the 29 delegates who gathered at Trades Hall on 10 May the major proportion were Victorians, many of whom held proxies from interstate bodies, and there was a distinct lack of direct representation from N.S.W. and Queensland. With the adoption of a card vote however the assembly could fairly claim to represent over 250,000 unionists, or half the Australian total. AWU delegate McNeill introduced a lengthy motion rejecting conscription on principle but affirming 'active sympathy' with the Allied cause and suggesting that adequate volunteers should be encouraged by enhancing conditions of enlistment .[1]

South Australian unionists supported conscription conditionally but this attitude was rejected by a substantial margin.[2] Next day McNeill withdrew his motion, which one delegate said was 'more an essay', and replaced it with another apparently drafted overnight which was approved by 258,018 - 753.

That this Congress records its uncompromising hostility to conscription of life and labor and, on behalf of the industrially organised workers of Australia, resolutely declares against any attempt to foist conscription upon the people of Australia.

Federal parliament was commended to implement a number of measures to encourage the recruiting it desired and when the Militants' proposal that Congress recommend the unions/^{to}meet imposition of conscription, by whatever strategy, with 'a general cessation of work' coordinated by a national executive/^{it}was defeated 129,730 - 103,728; this was narrow enough to result in a compromise decision asking all Australian trade unions to take a referendum of their members on the advisability of the scheme. Approval of action against all conscriptionist parliamentarians was endorsed and an executive of twelve established and a president and secretary appointed. All of these were Victorians: six of the fourteen were members of the Victorian state executive - including its president and a vice-president - while others represented were the VSP, Militants and prominent union leaders, being empowered by the Melbourne THC to raise funds and

[1] Australian Trade Unionism and Conscription, being a Report of Proceedings together with Manifesto of the National Executive, Melbourne 1916 pp.11-12.

[2] Ibid. pp.12-13

employ the services of Holloway as secretary, later succeeded by John Curtin. Frank Anstey drafted the manifesto released by the National Executive condemning conscription as 'an instrument of working class subjugation' [1] and on 18 May another, unrelated trade union conference in Hobart comprising union representatives from all states except for Queensland and W.A., also unanimously recorded 'uncompromising hostility to conscription of life and labor'. [2] Disappointed, at their next meeting the Militants expressed 'a consensus of opinion that in refusing to recommend use of the general strike weapon, congress utterly failed to rise to a great occasion', [3] having in effect discovered the limits of action of the most active majority of Australian unions. Only the radical Brisbane unions and the Queensland AWU branch endorsed it.

When the manifesto was circulated by the Melbourne THC under the authority of the National Executive the government censored it extensively and a military raid on the Trades Hall ensued to confiscate the supply of complete copies. Pearce brushed aside objections from a highly aggrieved delegation on 2 August [4] but nine days later a more representative delegation was led before Pearce at the instigation of state executive by Robert Mathews MHR. Comprising members of the Victorian state executive, FPLP, PLP and Trades Hall Council this was highly conciliating in approach and in effect offered the last opportunity for an understanding between the federal government and the Victorian Labor movement. State president Holloway stated that they wanted avoidance of a split and invited Pearce to give assurances that conscription would not be introduced: the latter however refused to be drawn on government intentions and pursued an adamant line. [5] Once Hughes' plans became clear at the end of the month state executive instructed FPLP members to resist in caucus and demanded of state and federal parliamentarians

[1] Manifesto of Australian Trade Union Congress 18 July, 1916. Ibid. pp.3-6.

[2] Report of Interstate Union Congress. Hobart 15 - 18 May 1916 p.18. This was a successor to the Grand Council of Labor, a prototype ACTU and had met to devise unification proposals for Australian unions, unrealised until 1927.

[3] Labor Call 18 May, 1916.

[4] Alf Bennett, Holloway, Hyett and H.E. Foster. Pearce papers AWM 419/80/2 Bundle 7, item 42.

[5] Memo re Anti-Conscription Manifesto seized at Trades Hall and Labor Call Office 11 August 1916. Ibid. item 42.

'that unless they show reason for exemption, they are required to speak in opposition to conscription'. [1] THC merely reaffirmed its previous attitude and threatened expulsion for non-complying unions. [2] FPLP members complied readily enough in the confused circumstances but because of the quandary in which the two Victorians in Hughes' cabinet were placed state executive ordered them to resign on 12 September to lead opposition in parliament. Frank Tudor obeyed willingly [3] and resigned at the caucus meeting two days later. Senator E.J. Russell hung back, accepting Hughes' threat that the latter would surrender his commission if any further ministers left cabinet before the referendum. Russell pleaded that he opposed conscription and would in any case resign and enlist in November, remaining only to prevent a political crisis, but state executive was unimpressed, demanded that he place his services entirely at its disposal by 29 September and upon receiving no reply to the ultimatum, expelled him from the party. [4] Russell followed Hughes out of caucus and continued in office as a Nationalist: he, with PLP member William Main who was expelled on 27 September, were the leading Victorian rats. PLP leader George Elmslie suffered a personal conflict leading to a breakdown and after undertaking to speak neither for or against conscription was granted sick leave during the referendum and remained in office. [5]

Labor's campaign against the referendum in Victoria was a joint effort by the executives of the party, Melbourne THC and Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress, the personnel of which were closely interlocked. The last-named played a rather limited national role to justify its title, holding only one other interstate

[1] S. Blackburn quoting Victorian state executive Minutes for 1 September, 1916 in Maurice Blackburn and the ALP. op.cit. p.8.

[2] THC Minutes 31 August, 28 September, 1916.

[3] Although May Brodney claims only because the Militants had got at his federal electorate organisations. 'Militant Propagandists of the Labor Movement' op.cit.

[4] Stewart-Russell 30 September, 1916. This and the preceding correspondence on the affair was published in the Labor Call 21 December, 1916.

[5] E.J. Holloway, The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916-1917. Melbourne, 1966. pp.16-17. Labor Call 5 October, 1916.

conference between May and October when the general strike issue was raised again as a response to the call up of men in early October. At this interstate conference on 25 September it was decided to sponsor a 24 hour national stoppage in protest against the call-up and the National Executive adopted responsibility for organisation. The response was disappointingly low on the appointed day when processions and demonstrations occurred simultaneously in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. In Victoria a number of unions, most noticeably the AWU, abstained citing fear of invoking Arbitration Act penalties or of victimisation and there were some recriminations in the THC. [1] In N.S.W. the Sydney Labor Council supported the call and a quiet demonstration took place while in Brisbane the response of the BIC was most enthusiastic of all, but the 4 October strike was far from the original scheme of the radicals and was merely a prelude to the greater drama of referendum day. Apart from this instance the chief contribution by the National Executive was the dissemination of information and the liaison established by officials like T.J. Miller. On 21 October Victorian voters gave a bare margin in favor of conscription of 353,930 to 328,216. Further industrial action was contemplated by another interstate union conference in Melbourne on 11 November to force release of men assembled in camps, cancellation of the Proclamation and abandonment of the prosecution of defaulters but again it was felt necessary to refer this back to the unions before acting, [2] and before this cumbersome procedure could be completed the grievances were removed by government action. Despite the misgivings of some organisations and individuals the National Executive was then disbanded and its affairs wound up by a joint THC - Victorian state executive committee. [3]

[1] Reports THC meetings 5, 12 October in Labor Call 12, 19 October, 1916.

[2] Memo to Trade Unions Ibid. 9, 16 November, 1916.

[3] Frank Hyett especially warned of future reintroduction and the necessity for continued vigilance but agreed to work on the joint committee. Ibid. 30 November, 1916.

Following the referendum Victorian state executive took the initiative in demanding a policy of no-conciliation, resolving in early November

1. That this executive favor the immediate calling of a special interstate conference to deal with the present political situation, and that the secretary be instructed to communicate with the other state executives.
2. That the executive inform the Victorian members of the federal and state party that there must be no reconciliation with the members of parliament who were expelled from the movement, or who supported conscription during the recent referendum. [1]

Delegates carried these resolutions to the eastern state capitals and when the ALP federal conference convened in December, Scullin and Stewart moved the fateful resolution along the same lines as the latter clause.

The Agitation for Peace, 1917 - 18

After the conscription split in November, 1916 the major focus of Victorian radical groups returned to the peace issue. The APA was convinced of the potential for success and bent to the task with renewed fervor, [2] while the Militant Propagandists reverted to current controversies such as the IWW Twelve as well as peace. On 11 November the Militants discussed an international working class peace conference and resolved 'Members should press the matter forward throughout the leagues and unions as one of vital policy'. [3] Immediate results were obtained in the THC in gaining approval for their resolution that, as the workers were chief sufferers in time

[1] Statement by Arch. Stewart to Queensland state executive, CPE Minutes 10 November, 1916.

[2] Turner, Industrial Labor and Politics, p.171

of war

this Council considers that the time has arrived in the European war for the consideration of the terms of peace and this Council therefore urges the federal government to express this view to the Imperial government; [1]

and another early in the new^{year}/committing Council

to immediately begin a peace campaign by holding public meetings at which the people might be shown how their interests will be better served and their aspirations more thoroughly attained by the settlement of this war through negotiation instead of by a continuance of this inhuman carnage: the executive of the PLC be invited to cooperate . [2]

Later Council refused to provide a representative on the State Recruiting Committee [3] though in self-interest maintained delegates on the munitions committee and other war work organisations. [4] This work complemented that of the APA whose secretary announced that the forthcoming federal election should be fought on the issues of peace, the demand for Allied war aim statements and exposition of the working class view [5], organisation beginning for another Peace Alliance federal conference in Melbourne over Easter to expedite this work.

At this stage though the radical organisations ran into trouble in developing their agitation within the Labor movement when this and the decision by the Militants to push for actual structural changes in the party to secure greater union control [6] aroused the suspicion, then hostility of state executive. As in Queensland, the very success of radical organisation of the rank and file aroused

[1] THC Minutes 21 December, 1916

[2] Ibid. 18 January, 1917.

[3] Ibid. 1 February, 1917.

[4] Ibid. 26 July, 1917

[5] Turner op.cit. pp.171-2. Socialist 26 January, 1917.

[6] Labor Call 8 February, 1917

the antagonism of the established party leaders and the APA conference was proscribed. [1] When VSP and Peace Alliance figure Vida Goldstein refused to relinquish nomination as an independent Senate candidate, as both APA secretary F.J. Riley and the VSP urged, the state executive stand was strengthened and all but one branch withdrew from the Alliance conference. [2] Nevertheless the APA remained dependent upon the possibilities of influencing the Labor party as the only realistic avenue to success, maintaining

that the situation demands a prompt declaration on the terms of peace favored by the Commonwealth, and that of all parties the Federal Labor Party, in keeping with the structure and goal of the Labor movement, should make known and proclaim to the world its sympathy with such a declaration as necessary for the welfare of the warring peoples. [3]

State executive's fear that all this agitation would be turned against it was borne out at the state Labor conference from 7 - 9 July. In his presidential address Holloway referred to continued opposition to conscription but included the phrase 'We hope for a speedy and successful termination of the war', an aspiration challenged by the Militants who moved amendment of the report to substitute the following:

We hope for a speedy termination of the war, and maintain that the idea of victory by force of arms is not in the best interests of the working classes, and advise the conference to press the question of a peace without annexations or indemnities.

And that the incoming executive be instructed to use every means in its power to bring this about.

In debate one critic characterised the retiring leadership as a 'bone-headed executive' out of touch with fundamentals but the implied censure was defeated by 70 - 66. E.J. Hogan, MLA then launched an attack on executive member Frank Anstey for an alleged equivocal

[1] Socialist 2 March, 1917

[2] Turner op.cit. pp.172-3. In the VSP the divisive issue of running socialist candidates against official Labor party ones had been reawakened and a motion postponing consideration of this tactic until after the federal elections had only been passed by a few votes. VSP Minutes 28 March, 1917.

[3] Report 1917 APA conference, Socialist 20 April 1917.

attitude to conscription. Holloway himself left the chair to add his own criticisms and it seemed as if the whole conscription campaign was to be acrimoniously refought until Anstey rebutted the charges personally and easily survived in a vote 96 - 32. Still dissatisfied, the original amendments to the report were recommitted by the radicals and this time obtained 86 out of 182 votes ~~in~~ support: however this was deemed insufficient to cause recommitment which required 2/3, or 94 votes. More efforts followed to have the reference deleted altogether, then to refer the report back to the executive, but its defenders persevered and it was adopted ultimately without amendment. [1]

When a Militant-inspired motion seeking abolition of compulsory training from Labor's defence plank was put up, Blackburn countered with an amendment to restrict its operation to men over 21 years of age, supported by Scullin and Calwell, while Barnes argued for the status quo. On this matter the Militants proved to have the numbers and they insisted that federal conference delegates be bound to this decision. Consolidating their strength the Militants next succeeded in having endorsed by 82 - 65

The abolition of the manufacture by private enterprise of all material and implements for war and the establishment of international arbitration to finally settle international disputes.

Such an intermingling of quite substantial issues in this last led to reference of the questions of peace and attitudes to the war to a committee for drafting of proposals, comprising three VSP members (A.W. Foster, P.H. Hickey and M. Blackburn), a principle Militant (Ben Mulvogue of the Builders' Laborers), Hogan from the PLP and other union leaders D.P. Russell, E.J. Russell, P.J. Brandt and P.J. Clarey. These delegates withdrew to consult A.C. Willis, who had arrived from Sydney with details of the NSW Labor conference peace resolution, drafted principally by himself and Arthur Rae upon the basis of APA policy. While this took place a more or

[1] Report Victorian 1917 state conference pp.6-10.

less routine affirmation against compulsory service and economic conscription (enlistment deliberately induced by causing unemployment amongst eligibles) was moved but the Militants were unpacified and McGowen moved a similar motion including its sting at the end -

Further, this conference expresses dissatisfaction at the weak-kneed attitude adopted by the central executive with respect to recruiting by Labor members of Parliament.

McGowen called for a definite instruction to be issued: 'Conference ought to say that Labor members should not go on recruiting platforms and bring about economic conscription as had been happening'. Deletion of the censure was immediately proposed, Holloway leaving the chair to defend the executive which 'had not swerved one hair's breadth' from conference policy. Scullin and Blackburn were among executive members who defended their administration and the amendment, minus the censure was carried. Further on Mulvogue moved another Militant resolution adopted less than a week after the referendum [1] 'That the central executive be instructed not to endorse the candidature of any member of parliament who did not publicly assist in the anti-conscription campaign'. Obviously aimed at figures like the unfortunate George Elmslie, immediate objections resulted in this being dropped. [2] When Foster presented the report of the peace plank committee it proved to be a recommendation that the NSW policy be adopted in toto. Willis was admitted, addressed conference in support of the report and it was duly approved as Victorian policy also. Blackburn introduced a five clause statement on the war attributing it to the causes defined by the Zimmerwald-Marxist conference and this was adopted in addition. [3]

By and large the state executive survived quite safely the organised attempt to embarrass it led by the Militants. A basic continuity in its composition was maintained and even though the major resolution on peace had drawn so heavily on the APA it must be stressed

[1] Labor Call 9 November, 1916.

[2] Report p.19.

[3] Ibid. pp. 18-19.

that this was because of other reasons than the success of Alliance agitation or conversion of the majority of the Victorian party in conformity with its self-chosen mode of operation. Rather, the peace plank had been adopted despite the recently developed peak of antagonism between the Victorian state executive and the local Alliance, owing much to the indirect creation of a receptive climate of opinion but stemming directly from the N.S.W. resolution of April, for which Willis and Rae had adapted the APA platform at their own convenience. Paradoxically, the Peace Alliance achieved perhaps its greatest and most direct success in Queensland, within the Brisbane Industrial Council, whereas in N.S.W. it was at best a marginal and indirectly effective group; in Victoria, though it is hard to distinguish responsibility for particular success between a number of groups participating in the peace agitation, the Alliance in its home state was undoubtedly central but was encountering major problems in its relations with the Labor party at this most crucial stage. For their part, the Militants found their support had peaked and was insufficient to dictate the pace of action within the party and could not effect an upset in the power structure. Without a coherent social critique and competing with equally determined, but less extreme anti-conscription and anti-war groups, the rank and file did not have to go far beyond their established leaders for provision of radical alternatives. In contrast to N.S.W., where the pitched battle against an entrenched and reactionary party leadership permitted development of a broad base of support by union radicals and consolidation of structural changes confirming their position, the Militants in Victoria were essentially confined to agitation on current issues and did not survive attrition of their animating spirits, collapsing by the end of the war. The VSP had survived and its sympathisers continued in high party office, but only by conforming so closely to the Labor party as to become at times indistinguishable from it.

State executive had won its battle to move at its own pace and proceeded to hasten slowly, rejecting a THC recommendation inspired by the Militants to direct all Labor parliamentarians to decline

assistance in the voluntary recruiting campaign: those responsible in the THC were prosecuted under the War Precautions Act and some fined. [1] Leading figures in the executive such as Blackburn and Scullin were by no means conservative, being strongly anti-conscription and dubious as to the value of continuing the war, but were also concerned with broader issues of defence and protecting white Australia and remained acutely aware of electoral considerations. By mid-1917 executive issued a warning to Australian Labor organisations about re-introduction of conscription and convened a conference of Victorian unions and TLCs to prepare them. [2] When the second referendum was announced the Victorian response was as a result far more coordinated, executive forming an Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee with the THC with representation from VSP, ASP, Women's Peace Army and No-Conscription Fellowship, but these it was stipulated were 'entirely under our direction to avoid overlapping'. [3]. Again E.J. Holloway was seconded by the THC for full-time organising duties. On this second occasion Victoria changed to a rejection of the government proposal -

Victoria	Yes	No
1916	353,930	328,216
1917	329,771	332,490

At successive occasions thereafter the party used electoral platforms to push its peace policy, stressing that as the war was no longer a matter of the very survival of the Empire 'We favor the immediate cessation of the war and the calling of an international conference to settle peace terms'. [4] It also began to sponsor peace rallies

[1] THC Minutes 19 July, 1917.

[2] Labor Call 14 June, 19 July, 1917.

[3] Report of Joint Committee THC and state executives
THC Minutes 8 November, 1917.

[4] Grampians federal by-election manifesto issued by Victorian state executive. Ross's Monthly 19 January 1918; Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics pp.173-4.

on Sunday afternoons in Melbourne [1]. Perhaps the best exemplar of the situation at this time was the VSP decision to seek approval by two state executive members, Anstey and Foster, for its own peace manifesto and acceptance of their amendments before its adoption by the annual general meeting and submission to the next Peace Alliance conference in Sydney. [2].

At state conference 24 March - 1 April, 1918 there was a marked difference from the preceding one: when criticism was offered by Foster, an executive member, of the performance in federal and state elections by the party he was fiercely assailed by his colleagues, who seemed to regard any such reflections as disloyal and even treacherous. [3]. Even while Foster was re-elected unopposed as party treasurer another executive member, R.H. Gill, successfully brought in new party rules designed to secure the leadership from the threat of hostile factions by prevention of canvassing for selection as conference delegates and the preparation, distribution or conniving at conference tickets. [4]. Scullin, Stewart, Holloway, Blackburn, Bennett and Barnes - all executive members - were chosen during 1917 by rank and file ballot as federal conference delegates and were already constrained to vote against compulsory training in the party's defence plank. No scope was permitted for further direction however, Blackburn and Holloway presenting a motion which they claimed represented a composite of all the agenda items on the subject -

That this conference enthusiastically reaffirms its resolutions of 1917 upon peace and war; approves what has already been done in the work of propagating these ideas, instructs the incoming executive to continue to extend that work and to secure the discussion of peace in the federal parliament. Further this conference recommends the federal conference to make it a plank of the federal platform that Australia shall engage no more in oversea wars.

[1] Statement by C.J. Bennett, Minutes 1918 ALP federal conference, p.5.

[2] VSP Minutes, 6, 11, 27 February, 1918

[3] Labor Call 11 April, 1918

[4] Ibid. 18 April, 1918.

Speaking to his motion Blackburn affirmed that 'It was better that there should be European powers in the Pacific than another nation which they knew of'. According to Holloway 'there was a great problem confronting Australia in the maintenance of its ideals, and they would be worse than children if they failed to recognise that the presence of European powers in the Pacific was a national safeguard for the future'. Introduction of the Japanese problem into the debate on the war was no coincidence, it having been a constant theme prior to the conscription crisis and reiterated despite the censorship on an almost weekly basis in the pages of the Labor Call[1] Scullin, Barnes and Bennett were also impressed by the Japanese menace and the motion was carried. Conference also indicated a desire for Australian representation on any peace conference and again affirmed hostility to conscription. [2]

State executive was disinclined to attend the Governor-General's recruiting conference at first because of the 'embittered' state of the working class, demanding of the government that it 'bury the hatchet' and undertake certain indicated reforms, [3] but when other states agreed to attend Scullin was sent as state president and Elmslie represented the PLP, helping to draft the eventual declaration at the conference. Melbourne THC declined to attend at all. When federal conference was held at Perth the Victorians loyally stood by their instruction to oppose the existing defence plank, Bennett, Barnes, Scullin and Blackburn indicating though that their personal preferences lay with the compromise. Although there had been moves on state executive in the absence of a recruiting policy to define a position, the full executive decided that, as there had been no direction by (state) conference, the recommendation by the metropolitan members should not be dealt with. [4]. Victoria subsequently supported the policy on participation in the war submitted to

[1] Even the socialists divided on this issue. Blackburn's views were shared by Riley of the VSP and APA. Socialist 26 January, 1917. Only a few, such as Adela Pankhurst, had dared mention the possibility of controlled immigration of Japanese in an address upon the color problem. Ibid. 15 June, 1917.

[2] Report Victorian 1918 state conference pp.4-5.

[3] Stewart - W.A. state executive. ALF state executive Minutes 8 April, 1918.

[4] C.J. Bennett, Minutes 1918 ALP federal conference.p.5.

the party plebiscite [1] and with Blackburn appointed by the executive as part-time editor of the Call to assert greater control over content [2] that paper urged Labor supporters to endorse conference policy, which was duly approved by 2:1 margin. Upon the declaration of the Armistice the Victorian party looked with some self-satisfaction upon Labor's role during the war and its eventual policies, regarding the outcome as a fulfilment of them. 'The general principles are settled. And they are ours'. [3]

- [1] Speech by J.H. Scullin Bijou Theatre, Melbourne, 1 September, 1916. Labor Call 5 September, 1916.
- [2] State executive annual report, 1919. Ibid. 24 April, 1919.
- [3] Corangamite federal by-election manifesto issued by Victorian state executive. Westralian Worker 6 December, 1918.

QUEENSLAND, 1914 - 1918

Queensland Labor exhibited features peculiar to the geographic, economic, political and social characteristics of that state, conditions which bear so importantly on the experiences of the various Labor parties. It also compels attention as an exceptional case: where other Labor parties, except in Victoria, suffered undeniable failures during the war the Queensland branch thrived. Not only did the Ryan government maintain its hold on office from 1915 but it avoided also substantial schism at all levels in the ranks. Reasons for this can be attributed mainly to the late development of Labor governments in Queensland in contrast to all other states, again excepting Victoria. Before 1915 the party had known only coalition with progressive liberals, broken off when the majority had decided that the short term benefits had been realised and that they must pursue their future as a separate entity. [1] Whereas also party organisation had been fixed for some time in other states, evolution of the Queensland party continued with adaptations of the machinery until midway through the war. By the end of this process the advantages of relative satisfaction with the power structure and confidence in its capabilities in the Queensland movement were in marked contradistinction to several southern states.

Unionism in Queensland was regionally divided between the Brisbane metropolitan organisation, which suffered severe reversals after its 1912 general strike, and the bush and outback unions, enjoying greater numerical and organisational strength from a process of amalgamation culminating in 1913 with creation of the giant Queensland branch of the AWU. Henceforward this union offered a fruitful source of parliamentary talent and a strong bulwark of moderate leadership

[1] Fortunately the sum of research on early Labor history in the state has been published in D.J. Murphy, R.B. Joyce and C.A. Hughes (eds.) Prelude to Power: The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland, 1895 - 1915. Brisbane, 1970; especially D.P. Crook's chapter 'The Crucible - Labour in Coalition, 1903 - 07.' The Dawson government in 1899 may be dismissed as an aberration.

in later years. Union vs. parliamentary conflict had not been unknown but reforms in 1916 satisfactorily accommodated unions on the basis of numbers [1] When Labor won office in 1915 with 52% of the vote it was the result of intelligent leadership from the PLP led by T.J. Ryan, who recognised the need for a broad appeal to rural and urban-liberal interests and exploited war engendered inflation exacerbated by the incumbent administration. Ryan immediately embarked upon measures vigorously implementing Labor promises, including substantial revision of the industrial laws imposed after 1912 and commencement of a legislative program in consultation with the AWU and Brisbane Industrial Council establishing, inter alia, state enterprises in the sugar and meat industries exerting a totemic ideological value in addition to practical and effective price control. Demonstration of diligent adherence to the Labor platform by the Ryan government fed the optimism experienced with electoral victory. [2] Satisfactory government performance was reinforced by the changes in representation approved at the party's triennial Labor-in-Politics Convention in February-March, 1916 giving strength proportionate to size to affiliates on both conventions and the CPE. State executive now comprised 11 members elected by convention, one each from the PLP and Queensland members of the FPLP and a varying number of direct nominations from larger unions admitted according to a fixed formula.

Under this arrangement the AWU became the largest single bloc on the CPE. Since 1913 this union was led by E.G. Theodore, MLA who became Ryan's state treasurer. Oligarchical in structure, the AWU

[1] The process of evolution is described in Murphy and others ibid. and by J.B. Dalton, The Queensland Labour Movement, 1889 - 1915 and P.J. Bray, E.G. Theodore and the Queensland Labour Movement, 1909-1925, both B.A. honors theses, University of Queensland, 1961 and 1951 respectively.

[2] Demonstrated in the first Annual Report of the BIC Daily Standard 23 July, 1915 and a recommendation by the BIC for affiliation by unions to the Central Political Executive Ibid. 19 November, 1915. Also F.M. Forde in the Foreword Prelude to Power; J. Larcombe, Notes on the Political History of the Labour Movement in Queensland Brisbane, 1934; D.J. Murphy, 'The Establishment of State Enterprises in Queensland, 1915-1918.' L.H. 14 May, 1968, pp.13-22.

inclined to moderation in policies despite strong radical figures in its ranks popularly supported by the rank and file and which the leadership clique took some time to isolate. [1] Once the first rank of leadership, men like Theodore and W. McCormack, became engrossed in parliamentary duties a stable hierarchy emerged under W.J. Riordan, state president, W.J. Dunstan, secretary, and a group of other reliables whose names recur in delegations to Queensland Labor bodies as well as the contingent to national AWU conventions. According to Childe the union disposed of the services of 32 fully paid organisers [2], as well as its CPE and convention votes and parliamentary representation, making its imprimatur invaluable for candidates, especially in northern and western electorates, and its political funds were a substantial party resource - £400 was granted to the CPE in the 1915 election year. Based in Brisbane, the AWU organ Queensland Worker reached out to a broader audience than the metropolitan Labor newspaper the Daily Standard and dissenting opinions were excluded from its consistently orthodox editorial line. While the appeal of figures such as Ernie Lane could not be prevented, his sentiments depended for support on membership militancy and it proved possible to isolate him organisationally to prevent development of a permanent power base. [3] A monolithic structure facilitated continuing support for parliamentary action and an amicable though not invariable AWU - PLP relationship. [4]

in importance

Next to the AWU was the Queensland Railways Union with a radical leadership destined to play an important role in party affairs

Brisbane metropolitan unions were organised from July, 1914 under the Brisbane Industrial Council which was at least in part the embodiment of smaller, urban unions' dislike of the vast, oligarchical

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- [1] A bitter account by one of the principle AWU radicals is provided by E.H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk. Reminiscences of a Rebel, Brisbane, 1939 especially pp.146-50, 158.
 - [2] How Labour Governs pp.69-70
 - [3] Lane, pp.142, 146-7. He worked for most of these years as industrial writer on the Standard under the nom de plume 'Jack Cade'.
 - [4] R. Murray suggests that it was not until the thirties that the union attained its peak of party control under Forgan-Smith. The Split Melbourne, 1970.pp307-8.

and meliorative AWU . [1] This antipathy was nicely illustrated at the beginning of the war. It was a characteristic reaction to that event of the Labor movement that amidst the launching of patriotic funds and associations Brisbane unions formed within a week a combined committee to deal with unemployment and anticipated social dislocation. Chief convenor E.G. Theodore was elected chairman by the 14 unions represented, [2] but by November the BIC began protests that the committee was usurping its own functions until, with Theodore's resignation under pressure of the election preparations and a decline in the urgency of the problems, the committee was wound up and its duties transferred to the BIC. In fact the Industrial Council belied its title, only a few affiliates being true industrial unions and the others craft-based: indeed one initial objective was seen as regrouping unions on an industry-wide basis. Nevertheless a substantial and impressive shift to the political left is discernible once the war began to progress. Whereas in Sydney and Melbourne union organisations the same process owed considerably to the gradual success of a radical minority seeking to lead opinion shifts as mass militancy increased, BIC delegates appear to have instinctively adopted radical attitudes from the start, opposing compulsory registration of manpower by 17 - 1 [3] and writing to the FPLP stating their preparedness to 'strongly oppose conscription ... in any other form'. [4.] Establishment of an Anti-Conscription and Anti-Militarism League and the arrival of organisers from the south seemed less to galvanise militancy than channel that already prominent. On the initiative of local Quakers and with assistance by Adela Pankhurst and Cecilia John

[1] S.H. Procter, "The rise and decline of the Australian Building Industry Employees' Union in Brisbane, 1912-18". L.H.13 November, 1967.pp.26-32.

[2] Later increasing to 25, Minutes Combined Unions of Brisbane 9 August, 1914.

[3] BIC 7, 21 July, 1915

[4] D.S. 23 July, 1915

from Melbourne, an Australian Peace Alliance was established in Brisbane on 14 November, 1915 and immediately began propagandising unions from its offices in Trades Hall. [1] Within two years of its formation BIC secretary George Gavin proudly referred to the class-conscious approach, concerning war-related issues particularly, which 'has established a reputation for uncompromising militancy throughout Australia'. [2] By 1918 the BIC developed policies against the war second only to the extreme opinions in the N.S.W. Industrial Vigilance Council. Unions disagreeing with this leftward stance tended to drop out of the BIC and transfer their Labor affiliations to several other organisations, leaving the radicals in control.

In 1913 the advanced section of the AWU failed at the first of Queensland branch's delegate meetings (That is, state conference: delegates were elected by popular vote from five geographical regions enabling men such as Lane to obtain selection) to achieve a condemnation of compulsory military training, after invocation of the 'Asiatic menace' and a milder objection to possible anti-working class use of the military was approved instead. [3] Brisbane Combined Unions Committee initially refrained from expressing purely political opinions but the BIC declared against compulsory registration in mid-1915, complained about FPLP advocates of recruitment, [4] and, after checking the opinion of its affiliates, requested members not to assist the manpower census as being opposed to unionism and democratic practices. [5] Anti-conscription activity began to flourish in

[1] Ibid. 15 November, 3, 22 December 1915, BIC 5 January, 1916.

[2] Second annual report, BIC. D.S. 11 July, 1916.

[3] Lane p.121

[4] BIC 4 August, 1915.

[5] D.S. 23 July, 1915.

Brisbane union circles as Universal Service League agitation commenced and the Standard established that a majority of PLP members appeared to oppose conscription by a survey of public figures.[1]

To the BIC must go the honor of first forceful opposition to Hughes when the newly selected Prime Minister travelled to the Wide Bay electorate north of Brisbane for the by-election caused by Andrew Fisher's resignation. Sharing Melbourne THC resentment of the supplementary questions concerning enlistment attitudes on the federal war census cards, the BIC advised its members to ignore these interrogations and arranged a deputation to notify Hughes of their opposition to 'veiled conscription'. [2] On 8 December their president A. Skirving and two others in company with J.B. Sharpe, Labor MHR for Oxley, publicly interviewed Hughes at his hotel. When the latter declined an invitation to address Council the delegates presented a resume of their views against conscription, which affronted Australian democratic tradition and threatened hard-won union benefits. 'We feel that the Federal Labor party is too acquiescent insofar as the mandates of the Imperial Government are concerned' - Australia had quite separate ideals and should accord them priority. Hughes in reply stressed his own union leadership credentials, promised that compulsory military service would not be introduced without an appeal to the country and stated that he hoped it could be avoided - but there were certain circumstances which, if they knew of them, would cause every Britisher among them to enthusiastically approve conscription. With a final adjuration against defiance of the law the Prime Minister terminated the interview. [3] Next evening the delegates notified Council of their dissatisfaction with Hughes' replies and proposed a censure of the federal government on account of them and its abandonment of the 1915 referenda. Council however split evenly, 9 - 9, over the

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- [1] The sample was highly selective and took care to present conscription as undesirable but represents a useful early recording of views. Ibid. 4-13 October, 1915.
 - [2] BIC special meeting 6 December, 1915; D.S. 7 December, 1916.
 - [3] Ibid. 9 December, 1915.

suggestion to deny support to the Wide Bay candidate, who in the event lost by 86 votes. [1] The principle of retaliation against politicians over conscription had made its first appearance.

Early in new year the BIC endorsed the Peace Alliance platform unanimously and protested to the ALP federal executive against the recruiting drive as only 'a step from conscription'. [2] Almost simultaneously, the AWU delegate meeting strongly opposed conscription in a debate acrimoniously condemning the federal cabinet and momentarily toyed with the idea of withholding campaign contributions for conscriptionist parliamentarians. [3] So far Labor state executive was more moderate, leaving participation of party branches on local recruiting committees, as suggested by the State Recruiting Committee, to the individual branches instead of proscribing assistance to them as one member suggested [4] and as the BIC had already decreed. [5] So matters stood when the triennial state convention was held in Rockhampton from 28 February - 4 March. Delegates lost little time in condemning conscription as unnecessary and inequitable [6] and turned their attention to a Peace Alliance-based motion in favor of democratic control of foreign policy.

In support of his motion Mr. T.H. Wood referred to the recent Anglo-Japanese Alliance ... which, he said, the workers of Australia were not at all conversant with. The subject matter should have been made available to

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- [1] Because of the BIC deadlock no action appears to have followed and it is impossible to determine the share of the conscription issue in this defeat. Ibid. 10, 21 December, 1915.
 - [2] The APA platform was that formulated by the Victorian parent branch in 1915. Ibid. 7 January, 1916
 - [3] A motion to that effect was ruled out after it was explained that no controls could be exerted over the annual subvention to CPE. Ibid. 17 January, 1916
 - [4] CPE 19 January, 1916
 - [5] BIC 19 January, 1916; D.S. 21 January, 1916
 - [6] Changing a militantly-couched phrase 'to fight' conscription to the more conciliating 'protests against'. Minutes Labor-in-Politics Convention, 1916, p.90

let them know how they stood. The Australian Labor Movement had long pledged itself to upholding a white Australia policy, and should be made acquainted with the result of the Alliance. [1]

With more appropriate phrasing, reducing the item to a 'request' to the FPLP to urge adequate Australian representation at the peace conference, the motion was carried unanimously. [2] Insufficient support for a proposal denying party endorsement for Labor conscriptionist politicians submitted by the Oxley Workers' Political Association (that is, party branch), could be attracted and several alternatives were also rejected, speakers regarding such a forthright declaration as premature. [3] Structural changes approved at this convention establishing as fair a basis of representation in the party as formal organisational constraints permitted hereafter determined that so long as the PLP retained AWU support on state executive it could exert the predominating influence there: only a very deep and extensive antagonism by a united union movement could upset this situation.

Following the 1916 convention Queensland Labor became even more firm against conscription. FPLP members Sharpe, Page and Senator Mullan addressed themselves to union fears at the Brisbane Eight Hours Day banquet [4] and the BIC stand was unequivocal at the occasion of the Australian Trade Union Congress in Melbourne that month. [5] As the apprehensions increased preceding Hughes' return to Australia so did consolidation of trade union support grow, resulting in the first mass anti-conscription meeting, organised by the APA with Industrial Council support, at which Senator Myles Ferricks and W.J. Finlayson MHR

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- [1] Ibid. p.92; Cf. Official Report Labour-in-Politics Convention, 1916. The latter record contains more detail, both can be profitably supplemented by accounts in the Labor papers.
 - [2] D.S. 6 March, 1916.
 - [3] Minutes, p.101; Official Report
 - [4] D.S. 1 May, 1916.
 - [5] The BIC proxy was given to R.S. Ross of the VSP, Ibid. 18, 25 April, 1916.

spoke and several PLP members attended. [1] Resolutions were passed calling upon the federal government to stand by the class it represented, [2] and finally on 26 August, while in Melbourne the FPLP was locked in debate over the conscription referendum proposal, a meeting of all unions was convened by the BIC on the suggestion at the TUC in May

for a general strike against the imposition of conscription. [3] Fifty unions sent representatives and also included were a number of non-voting delegates from the APA, local Womens' Peace Army, IWW and other organisations. President of the BIC, R.J. Mulvey, announced the object as being to secure agreement upon a concerted response should conscription be introduced and, although the meeting was concerned with industrial action, AWU president Riordan warned that 'already the political graves are being prepared for the politicians who advocated conscription and also for those who were too cowardly to come out in the open against the menace'. [4] The next day the meeting 'enthusiastically and unanimously' adopted the plan to meet conscription with a general strike and set a committee to work to lay preparations. [5] General industrial action had been urged by a left-wing minority at the Melbourne national TUC and referred to the constituent organisations as being too controversial: no other industrial body appears to have endorsed it, though many later participated in the 24 hour stoppage protesting proclamation of the call-up in October organised by the national executive of the TUC. Brisbane unions' decision to adopt the original scheme was a measure of the advanced state of feeling there.

[1] D.S. 4 August, 1916.

[2] These were drafted by E.H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk p.167

[3] BIC 2, 9, 16 August, 1916.

[4] D.S. 28 August, 1916.

[5] These conclusions of the conference were suppressed by heavy censorship of the report but the first edition of the Standard escaped interference and the results widely publicised by other means. See No Conscription Manifesto, Brisbane Trade Union Congress 26 - 27 August, 1916 and other confiscated material collected by Neil Gow L.H. 26, May 1974 pp.87-91.

Corresponding with these developments was a firmer stand by the CPE, which in early August unanimously affirmed the Rockhampton resolution on conscription and for the first time explicitly warned parliamentarians that it would enforce compliance. [1] Once the referendum was announced the CPE refused an invitation by Hughes to send a delegation to meet him in Melbourne to hear his case, [2] and denounced the FPLP decision as an 'extremely unsatisfactory procedure'. It was regretted that federal executive had not been convened as had been promised and a call by N.S.W. party for a special ALP federal conference instead was endorsed; meanwhile it was decided to urge all Labor organizations in the country to lobby FPLP members against approval of enabling legislation for the referendum. [3] Executive hesitated before embarking upon an anti-conscription campaign in order to secure more accurate information on the decision from Page, who attended on 13 September and presented a written report and verbal summary of the reasoning behind caucus approval for the referendum. This however confirmed the CPE in its attitude and Queensland FPLP members were accordingly informed

that endorsement will not be given to the candidature of any sitting member, either of the House of Representatives or of the Senate, who does not oppose by his vote in the Federal House the passage of the Conscription Referendum Bill now before the House. [4]

As a result of this delay by the CPE the initiative in organising the anti-conscription campaign went elsewhere by default. AWU state executive made the first concerted move by calling a conference of representatives from the CPE, Parliamentary Labor Party, BIC and newly-formed Metropolitan District Council for the purpose of founding a joint campaign committee and granted an initial £100 to a fighting fund.⁵ Metropolitan Council had already suggested a campaign

[1] CPE 7 August, 1916

[2] The invitation was relayed by James Page MHR, Queensland FPLP representative on the CPE and government whip in the Representatives. Ibid. 4 September, 1916.

[3] Ibid. 8 September, 1916.

[4] Ibid. 6, 13 September, 1916. A request rather than a flat instruction to this effect was suggested by more moderate members and defeated.

[5] Ibid. 8 September, 1916; D.S. 9 September, 1916. The Metropolitan Council had been launched on 21 August to combine Labor party branches with Brisbane unions unaffiliated to the BIC. Ibid. 22 August, 1916.

fund on 4 September and the Standard began acknowledgement of the first contributions two days later. [1] After ^{the}CPE agreed to representation and allocated its own £100 donation the meeting took place on 14 September at the Worker building of all Labor organisations [2] and it was resolved to constitute themselves the Queensland Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee with Theodore elected chairman and state secretary Lewis McDonald as secretary. This organisation led the Queensland forces at both 1916 and 1917 referenda and was firmly controlled by Theodore, who was concerned by the more extreme proposals advocated by such members as Lane, chairman of the literature sub-committee. Indeed some resentment was expressed at political domination of the committee at the start, the Metropolitan Council for instance insisting upon augmenting its representation to ensure pursuit of a hard, uncompromising line. [3]

One advantage enjoyed by Queensland Labor was the support for anti-conscription by the PLP. Premier Ryan had supported the war from the start [4] and a five-month trip to America and Europe, including tours of the front, did nothing to undermine his attitude for the remainder of the war [5], but he appears to have been unwilling to sacrifice the hard-won Labor government over a controversy concerning methods of participating in it and consequently became the only Australian parliamentary Labor leader to commit himself to defeat of the referendum. Individual PLP and FPLP members had been prominent in early agitation against conscription, but the PLP as a whole remained undecided, several members being equivocal or actually favorable to the

[1] Ibid. 5, 6, September, 1916

[2] Comprising: CPE - J.S. Collings, M. McCabe, G. Lawson and L. McDonald; PLP - J.A. Fihelly, W. McCormack, E.J. Theodore and J. Stopford; AWU - W.J. Riordan, W.D. Dunstan and E.H. Lane; two from the BIC and four from the Brisbane TUC of August; 2 from the Metropolitan District Council; the editors of the Worker and Standard, plus representatives from large unions such as the AMIEU and later the QRU and Watersiders. Ibid. 15 September, 1916.

[3] Ibid. 15, 26 September, 1916.

[4] For example presidential address Report Labour-in-Politics Convention 28 February 1916, p. 16

[5] D.S. 18 August, 1916. Also D.J. Murphy, T.J. Ryan: A Political Biography, Ph.D. Queensland, 1972.

referendum despite exertion of pressure against at least one MLA who 'had already been hauled over the coals'. [1] After abundantly clear affirmations by unions, ^{the} CPE and the AWU though, the parliamentary party also announced after a six hour meeting its opposition to compulsory service and cooperation in the campaign. Labor's legislative program would not be interrupted by an adjournment but participation by members who so desired would be facilitated. [2] Only one PLP member, the Minister for Railways John Adamson, was of sufficiently strong conviction to resign over conscription; Adamson had become a vice-president of the Universal Service League, proscribed by the CPE in early September, but was permitted to leave quietly without noticeable rancor or bitterness on 2 October. ^{The} CPE then circulated all PLP members to ascertain their attitudes and coordinate their participation in the campaign. [3] Two FPLP members from Queensland ignored state executive's directive by voting for the Military Services Referendum Bill [4] and were duly expelled. [5] Federal treasurer W.G. Higgs also supported the legislation and remained in the ministry despite his avowed personal opposition to conscription, under the influence of Hughes' threats and came within a single vote of similar treatment, [6] being fortunate to escape censure altogether. [7]

[1] D.S. 5 September, 1916

[2] Ibid. 12 September, 1916

[3] CPE 2 October, 1916

[4] T.W. Bamford and Senator Givens, federal executive president and crony of Hughes, CPD LXXX 20 September, 1916 p.8763 and ibid 22 September, 1916 p.8969

[5] CPE 30 October, 1916

[6] Ibid. 2 October, 1916

[7] Ibid. 20 October, 1916. Higgs' case was postponed for some time and a final vote on whether or not to withdraw his endorsement went 8 - 5 in his favor after support from Ryan.

First official mass meeting in the campaign was held on 28 September under Campaign Committee auspices, addressed by Ryan, who had barely returned from Melbourne and spoke against compulsion, but in support of F.G. Tudor's attitude in endorsement of a volunteer-based war effort. Theodore also spoke, delivering a typically analytical argument against compulsion while other speakers gave warnings of the peril to white Australia, a recurrent theme in Queensland as elsewhere. [1] For some this was a secondary factor while others obviously placed greater emphasis upon it for its emotional appeal and because colored Labor was still an issue, amongst Queensland sugar workers for example. [2] Brisbane unions meanwhile maintained close liaison with the Melbourne-based TUC national executive, approving its call for a mass stoppage on 4 October to protest the call-up proclamation, [3] which was accordingly held and proved a minor success with 6 - 7,000 unionists participating in a demonstration addressed by Ryan, Theodore and other notables, added point being lent by Hughes' ^{current} presence in Brisbane. [4] Class antagonism was clearly a polarising influence in the Queensland campaign, the specifically anti-working class character of conscription bearing no less of an appeal to one side than the Liberals' anti-socialism and hostility to Ryan's administration to another. [5] Herein lay much of the significance of the controversy over indiscreet remarks ^{about England} made by Fihelly at an Irish Association function, ⁶

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- [1] D.S. 29 September, 1916. Warnings concerning colored Labor were advanced during the prolonged debate by Theodore ibid. 4 October, McCormack, the Speaker ibid.; J.A. Fihelly, Minister without Portfolio ibid. 11 October; Riordan, AWU president, 29 September and 16 October; BIC leaders Mulvey and Boulton ibid.
- [2] Ibid. 27 July, 1916.
- [3] Ibid. 2 October, 1916.
- [4] Ibid. 4 October, 1916.
- [5] G.P. Shaw, 'Patriotism and Socialism : Queensland's Private War, 1916.' AJPH. 14, 2 August, 1973. pp.167-178
- [6] The minister characterised her as an island of 'cant, hypocrisy and humbug'. D.S. 13 October, 1916. Upon publication of the remarks by the non-Labor press the Governor refused to sit in the Executive Council with Fihelly until Ryan managed to extract a qualifying statement from the miscreant and blandly smoothed over the affair.

A measure of violence was added by clashes between anti-conscriptionists and soldiers, which seriously escalated following shooting of an officer and the formation of a Labor Volunteer Army to counter disruption. [1] Ryan attempted to counter Hughes' propaganda amongst Australian troops abroad by presenting a resumé of the anti-conscription cause to the Queensland Agent-General in London for dissemination by British Labor M.P. Philip Snowden, but the coded cable was suppressed by the Australian censors - there was regrettably no code word for 'conscription' which, recurring in plain text, alerted the authorities to the nature of the communication. [2] Queensland provided a No majority on 28 October of 158,051 to 144,200.

As in NSW, Victorian and Tasmanian parties, Queensland had already expelled state and federal parliamentarians as the FPLP split began and the state Labor movement generally was strongly disposed against reconciliation. [3] Certainly there was no doubt about the CPE policy after Arch. Stewart arrived from Melbourne to address it and urge endorsement of his party's stand. Initially the CPE desired Queensland FPLP members not to act until federal conference had convened and issued a directive, [4] but this went by the board in Melbourne, and Queensland federal conference delegates were instructed to support the Victorian attitude on expulsions. [5]

Despite this happy accord within the party on opposition to compulsory service during the crisis of 1916 there had been a significant conflict within the Campaign Committee between those interested solely in organising the No vote and another section desiring to broaden the scope of the work while they had the chance. E.H. Lane recorded that

there was a very clear-cut division between the purely political anti-conscriptionists and the anti-war section. Our forces were very evenly divided with the politicians headed by Theodore and camp followers, which

[1] Ibid. 10, 11, 13 October, 1916.

[2] Ibid. 21 December, 1916.

[3] BIC 1 November, 1916; Metropolitan Council D.S. 7 November, 1916; a reconvened Brisbane TUC on 11 November ibid. 13 November, 1916.

[4] CPE 10 November, 1916.

[5] Ibid. 20 November, 1916.

included Riordan, Dunstan and other reactionary delegates. Many bitter fights were waged in the committee meetings between these two contending forces, principally on questions regarding support of the war. All proposals in the direction of peace or even criticism of the righteousness of the Allies' cause were ruthlessly opposed and defeated by the politicians who regarded the returning of votes and political power of far more importance than principles of humanity. [1]

After the referendum result the radicals were encouraged to press further by the presence of APA official T.J. Miller, who spent two months organising in Queensland during early 1917 with special attention to obtaining trade union and BIC support not only for the Alliance platform but for repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act itself. [2] Such agitation was especially significant insofar as the ALP intended to hold a federal conference in 1917 and it drew opposition from more moderate sections in the Queensland party who naturally resented interference from the divisive and electorally embarrassing extremists. On the ACC this was manifested in steps to block delegation of representatives to the 1917 national conference of the APA in Melbourne but, after 'the most virulent and unscrupulous opposition of the pro-war section of the committee' throughout several meetings, it was agreed to send two members financed by private subscription, after Theodore refused to disburse ACC funds for the purpose. [3] Lane and W.J. Wallace attended the Peace Alliance meeting despite a last minute withdrawal of ACC credentials in a snap vote of that organisation back in Brisbane; according to Lane a concerted effort was made by N.S.W. and Queensland leadership to prevent Labor association with the conference, which the Victorian executive had already proscribed.

Later that year the ACC was reconvened in anticipation of new federal government action, this time with local APA representation eliminated and an attempt to keep Lane out only failing after the latter secured the proxy of another organisation. This time Lane claimed that the

[1] Dawn to Dusk p.164

[2] Socialist 18 May, 1917.

[3] Dawn to Dusk, p.177

militants had a small majority of anti-war members and could have captured the position of secretary but declined to use their numbers for fear of destroying the consensus necessary for successful opposition to conscription. [1] Stimulating the radicals in this upsurge of energy was the apparent relapse of the Labor party to its previous attitude of support for the war; to the 'warm, patriotic sentiment' prevailing during the renewed voluntary recruiting drive in early 1917, which anti-conscriptionist parliamentarians Mullan and Page were assisting and Ryan and other PLP members approved. [2] Even when the CPE gave endorsement to the NSW 1917 state conference peace plank, drawing heavily on the APA platform, and recommended that it become ALP policy on the war, [3] Queensland radicals were unsatisfied with the scope this gave for maintenance of support for the war effort on unchanged lines. Their objections were reinforced by a broader discontent, leading the BIC to complain, at a special conference between its representatives and others from the state executive and PLP in September, of a widening gulf between industrial and political wings. Union interests, it was said, were disregarded by the government unless its attention was compelled by organised pressure and, after specific industrial grievances were ventilated, Collings added the complaint that exception was taken in many quarters to the party's attitude on war and recruiting. [4] Lane, Moroney and other CPE radicals tenaciously maintained pressure, one victory being adoption of a resolution in response to Labor Senator Maughan's attitude respecting postwar disposition of German Pacific colonies, declaring Queensland's opposition to statements in federal parliament on foreign policy not in accordance with 'the spirit of the international character of the Labor movement'. At the second conscription referendum in December, 1917 the same machinery swung into action as before and improved on the result of the first campaign.

[1] Ibid. pp.180-2.

[2] Memo by Capt. G.M. Dash, organising secretary State Recruiting Committee 11 June, 1917. Catts papers MS 658/Series1/No.6

[3] CPE 16 July, 1917; L. McDonald - P.C. Evans 19 July, 1917. Copy W.A. state executive correspondence, file 118 War-peace movement.

[4] CPE 10 September, 1917.

	No	Yes
1916	158,051	144,200
1917	168,875	132,771

Principal feature of the 1917 controversy was Ryan's celebrated clash with Hughes over censorship of Ryan's speeches and statements,[1] which further improved the Queensland Premier's increasing stature as leading Labor anti-conscriptionist and helped blunt the force of left-wing criticisms.

Again, success in the referendum campaign encouraged the peace advocates in Queensland unions and in early January, 1918 the BIC began cooperation in anti-war agitation with the APA,[2] which had continued its tactful approach to its work in the Labor movement.

The Alliance did not desire in the least to dictate to the unions. It only wanted to help them in this matter, and wanted the unions to take their part in the peace propaganda and use the whole strength of their organisations to bring about an early cessation of this and all other wars .[3]

Its success with this tactic in Queensland was marked compared to its NSW counterpart, which adopted the tactic only belatedly, and the parent organisation in Victoria, which succeeded in antagonising the party leadership to the detriment of its objectives. Union radicals and APA pressure ensured the prominence of war and defence at the Labor-in-Politics Convention held from 28 January - 7 February, 1918. Delegates there gave unanimous support for the NSW peace plank already

[1] D.J. Murphy, T.J. Ryan: A Political Biography, Robson, The First AIF pp.174-77

[2] D.S. 4 January, 1918.

[3] A.F. Gorman, APA spokesman. Ibid. 18 January, 1918.

approved by the CPE and it became a Queensland recommendation for the federal ALP conference. [1] Lane though conceded that the militants could rely upon only a third of delegates and the struggle proved difficult when on the final day discussion turned to one of a number of similar submissions on the agenda paper -

That the Convention urges upon the federal Labor Convention the necessity, in the interests of the workers of Australia, of the immediate repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act and that the Queensland delegates to Federal Convention be instructed to vote accordingly.

Prolonged debate took place before this motion gained approval in a division of 38 - 20 [2], with main disagreement centering upon the threat of Japan, the adequacy of home defence and the necessity of compulsory training for this task.

Return of the Ryan government in the March, 1918 state election with an increased majority further strengthened the political leaders and their supporters against the radical campaign for peace and cessation of Labor support, particularly by parliamentarians, of recruiting. The differences of attitude were revealed by reactions to the Governor-General's recruiting conference which both PLP and CPE agreed to attend, sending their leaders - Ryan and W.H. Demeane respectively. By contrast, the BIC executive replied to the invitation with a declaration

That this Council considers that the time has arrived for the present slaughter in Europe to cease and, instead of considering a scheme of recruiting, peace by negotiation is the first consideration of the workers of Australia. [3]

Ryan proved to be the outstanding Labor delegate at the recruiting conference, at which the participants resolved to urge support for voluntary enlistment. BIC executive again countered with its own submission on what Labor's attitude to the war effort should be, in a circular to Queensland unions that

[1] Minutes, Labor-in-Politics Convention 1918, P.148

[2] Ibid. pp.174 -5; Dawn to Dusk. pp. 211-14.

[3] D.S. 12 April, 1918

it appears to us that there is a cowardly fear on the part of many responsible leaders in the Labor political and industrial life of this state, both in and out of parliament, that the war spirit must be pandered to, that the talk of peace by negotiation on the basis of 'no annexations and no indemnities' is bad political tactics, that recruiting must continue, and that Labor must participate therein; in other words, that votes and support for our party - no matter how secured - are of more importance than the fundamental principles of our movement, or than even the lives of our brave Australian men now being so ruthlessly sacrificed in the protection of the interests of Labor's historic capitalist enemies.

We, therefore declare -

- (1) That inasmuch as the workers provide the blood and treasure to wage and pay for all wars, war is always the enemy of all workers in every land.
- (2) That we, the workers, always lose in every war, no matter which side to the quarrel wins.
- (3) That, therefore, the sole interest of the workers of all countries lies in stopping the present war.
- (4) That we demand, therefore, that the Empire, of which Australia is a part, shall at once endeavour to secure an armistice upon all fronts with a view to opening immediately negotiations for peace on the basis of 'no indemnities and no annexations'.
- (5) That we declare it our sincere belief that any member of the Labor movement in this state, whether attached to the parliamentary, political or industrial wing of the movement, who appears upon the recruiting platform or in any other way does any other act involving any further participation in the war by Australia, fails to correctly interpret the views of the workers upon this question, and displays lamentable ignorance of the fundamental principles of the working class movement. [1]

Although it was reported that the BIC adopted this 'unanimously and enthusiastically' the CPE remained unimpressed when Lane moved

[1] Ibid. 20 May, 1918

a paraphrase of the declaration in that body: Theodore rounded on the proposal and it was defeated, [1] delegates resolving to leave Labor's attitude to the war and recruiting up to federal conference. [2]

One last chance remained for the radicals to effect a shift in Labor policy in their favor, by determining the instructions given to the state federal conference delegation. Having already been bound by state conference to the abolition of compulsory training for home defence, Theodore and Fihelly challenged the principle of instruction itself. In ruling that the practice was valid, Demaine did agree that it would be understood that an instruction only extended to the principle of the issue involved. One last attempt to compel the federal delegates to oppose participation by state or federal politicians in recruiting was barely defeated by 8 - 7. [3] In Perth the NSW radicals made the running and managed to pick up support from most other states, including Ferricks and Collins from Queensland, on the extreme proposal that the ALP oppose any further despatch of troops overseas. After this was lost by a narrow margin several other Queensland members disregarded state conference decision on the defence plank and upon their return an attempt by the radicals to visit retribution upon them was defeated on the casting vote of the chairman. [4] State executive then accepted APA assistance in urging endorsement by the party rank and file of the 1918 federal conference recruiting policy, stipulating conditions for continued ALP support of the war effort, [5] and it can have been only with mixed feelings of satisfaction that the radicals welcomed the largest majority in the party plebiscite of any state branch of 3:1. [6]

[1] Dawn to Dusk pp. 215-16.

[2] CPE 25, 27 May, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 31 May, 1918

[4] Ibid. 10 October, 1918.

[5] Ibid. 1 August, 12 September, 1918.

[6] Report of returning officer E.J. Holloway, Report ALP federal conference, 1919, p.13

Despite their solid entrenchment in the BIC and consistent representation in the state councils of the Queensland party, the radicals had not been essential in ensuring firm opposition to conscription and in their most determined endeavour to swing Labor against participation in the war had manifestly failed. Faced with confident and capable party leadership from the PLP and extra-parliamentary wing, their numbers on state conference, the CPE and the Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee proved just insufficient on the crucial occasions. Rank and file support for this section continued after the war for some time but had passed its peak, and the renamed Queensland Central Executive [1] lost little time in launching a determined campaign against those 'seeking to spread a crafty and disruptive propaganda in the working class movement' .[2] Ostensibly aimed against IWW agitators, there seems justification for Lane's charge that the latter merely afforded the QCE a stalking horse against militant Laborites of any denomination. [3] The stage was set at the end of the war for a turbulent decade for relationships in the Queensland Labor movement between moderate PLP leaders and their supporters and the remaining radicals, on industrial issues and control of the party, but the first round had already been decided in the conflict over conscription and the war in favor of the former.

[1] After adoption of the title Queensland branch, ALP. QCE 20 November, 1918

[2] Solidarity or Disruption QCE official manifesto 11 March, 1919; also P.C. Conroy Political Action, Brisbane, 1918.

[3] Dawn to Dusk, pp.225-8

THE POWER STRUGGLE - SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1914-18.

Events in the South Australian Labor movement during the war provide another example of the conjunction between disagreement on a substantive policy issue and a fight for control of the party machine. The United Labor Party [1] was a development from Adelaide trade union growth in the 1880s. Annual conference provided the highest source of authority and the party was administered during the year by a state executive elected by conference. A legacy of the particular conditions of development was the ULP Council, a body of anything from 100-200 representatives from metropolitan unions, branches and other affiliates which met monthly and to which state executive presented regular reports for consideration and approval. In size the Council was almost a mini-state conference and provided a vital forum for the registration of opinion changes within the party lacking with the less flexible state conference/executive structure of most states. Most important combined union organisation was the United Trades and Labor Council of Adelaide.

Central to an understanding of the dynamics of South Australian Labor politics was the special relationship between Adelaide and the country. [2] From 1904 the ULP was the first party to couch its appeal in terms attractive to both metropolitan and rural electors, making special concessions to conciliate the latter by fostering rural party branches with the offer of greater control of finance and weighted representation on the hitherto urban-dominated party organs. Its success broadened the ULP from its metropolitan base but had grave implications for power distribution within the party and ultimately proved disruptive. Prior to the conscription crisis in 1916 the PLP leadership exercised greatest influence over the party, finding state conference support from moderate unions and urban branches and amongst the disproportionately numerous country representatives providing on

[1] ULP until 1918 when in compliance with federal conference decision it became South Australian Branch, ALP.

[2] A theme explored by J. B. Hirst, Adelaide and the Country. Melbourne, 1973 especially pp. 174-178, 193-207.

average some 30% of delegates between 1904-17. [1] Some protests had led to progressively more equitable representation for large unions in the prewar years but the biggest unions such as the AWU and United Laborers remained under-represented and resentful of this. In 1914 these two amalgamated to form the Adelaide branch of the AWU, by far the most powerful union in South Australia.

Developing from this theme was an acute parliamentary vs. industrialist conflict expressed in terms of union resentment of the 'black-coated brigade' of non unionists prominent in the PLP leadership. [2] Symptomatic of the unions' sense of grievance were unsuccessful motions at succeeding state conferences for adoption of a card vote. Outside the Labor party was a small but vocal radical community prior to the war; the Industrial Workers of the World first achieved prominence in Adelaide before Sydney became the Wobbly stronghold, [3] and an anti-militarist Australian Freedom League had been active in generating a climate of criticism of the Defence Act leading to detailed suggestions for reform at state conference in November, 1914. Combining with other socialist/religious elements after the war broke out, a branch of the Australian Peace Alliance was established, [4] but it had overstepped the bounds of prudent conduct over the matter of independent parliamentary candidates and incurred the antagonism of the Labor party. The role of local radicals proved to be a minimal one in affecting South Australian politics, [5] even when the prospects of serious trouble within the ULP were considerably enhanced by formation of a Labor government following the state elections in March, 1915. PLP leader Crawford Vaughan headed a ministry of whom two out of six had bona fide union backgrounds and the anticipation of this moved AWU state secretary

[1] According to Hirst, ibid. p. 199.

[2] N. J. O. Makin, A Progressive Democracy. Adelaide, 1918 p. 7; T. H. Smeaton, The People in Politics. Adelaide, 1914; J. I. Craig, A History of the South Australian Labor Party to 1917. M. A. Adelaide, 1940.

[3] Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics p. 64.

[4] Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia pp. 77-8.

[5] J. Playford, The Left Wing of the South Australian Labor Movement, 1908-1936. B.A. honors Adelaide, 1958.

Frank Lundie to forecast 'calamity' for South Australian workers. [1]
 During the campaign AWU organiser E.A. Miller took offence at the speech of a Labor candidate before a rural electorate which disowned the AWU log of claims, the very pandering to the country vote that outraged union leaders however electorally remunerative it might prove. Miller raged that the truth of the matter was that

persons who masquerade under the name of the State Labor Party forget that they are servants, not leaders nor masters. The unions are the masters; the Labor politician is merely a necessary evil to enable the unions to register their devices.

Irrespective of party electoral promises the AWU and other unions will carry on their own policy, and at the proper time they will enforce that policy 'cocky's' vote or no 'cocky's' vote. [2]

As this conflict began to grow during 1915 conscription also emerged as a matter for Labor concern. In response to Universal Service League agitation and a direct appeal by one of its leaders, the UTLC carried a motion opposing the objects of the League. [3] State conference in September-October 1915 struck a motion against conscription unless sanctioned by a referendum off the business paper however and state secretary J.H.S. Olifent quoted Fisher's last man, last shilling promise with approval in his report, merely calling for more war information to be released. [4] Opinion was still not much advanced in ULP Council in December when a declaration for the federal executive meeting against conscription per se was defeated by 2 : 1 majority and the two South Australian delegates were cautiously advised to support compulsory service abroad only in conjunction with appropriation of wealth. [5] Not until the intra party dispute over control developed to the point of open confrontation did the cause of anti-conscription acquire real importance.

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- [1] Letter, F.W. Lundie Register 1 November, 1916
 - [2] Hirst Adelaide and the Country quoting Register 25 February, 1915.
 - [3] Address by Professor Jethro Brown UTLC Minutes 8 October, 1915. Resolution recorded UTLC half-yearly Report 31 January, 1916.
 - [4] Minutes state conference 1915. Olifent soon volunteered and served as an officer.
 - [5] Minutes ULP Council 9 December, 1915.

In fulfilment of Lundie's prediction discontent on industrial issues and government attitudes grew apace. Vaughan condemned the Broken Hill miners' strike, antagonising Adelaide unions, [1] who sent a deputation of protest to R.P. Blundell, Minister for Industry, to raise the 'chaotic and generally unsatisfactory nature of state industrial legislation which is a distinct menace to industrial peace' and demand replacement of wages boards with conciliation and arbitration courts. [2] Agitation for a firmer stand on conscription continued, [3] and while turning down a motion declaring absolute hostility towards it, the UTLC approved compulsory service subject to three stipulations which had been previously circulated among the unions for comment:

this Council is opposed to conscription of males of military age unless it is clearly shown by those who are prosecuting the war that there is no other way out, and in that case the wealth of the nation shall be first the subject of conscription, and a referendum of members of organisations be taken to confirm the consent of trades unionists. [4]

After the UTLC Executive had received a delegation from Melbourne THC urging attendance at the Anti-Conscription TUC, the 5 May meeting decided to delegate a member to transmit this resolution and accordingly the views of nominees on the conscription question were heard. T.P. Howard, originator of the successful resolution, was elected in a vote of 45 - 16 against J.H.S. Olifent, who supported the war. [5] At this stage the views of the ULP Council paralleled those of the organised unions, [6]

[1] UTLC Minutes 10 February, 1916.

[2] Ibid. 25 February, 1916.

[3] Ibid. 10 March, 1916.

[4] Carried by 36 to 19 Ibid. 7 April, 1916.

[5] Ibid. 5, 6 May, 1916.

[6] After an extended debate in early March, Council approved a resolution from a number of alternatives, 'That no form of conscription of service shall be made legal unless measures be taken whereby the wealth of the community shall bear the whole cost of the war'. Union officials attempted to have the matter referred to affiliates but this was headed off by Reg Blundell and later quashed. Minutes ULP Council 9 March and 13 April, 1916.

but after the intensity of opposition became known to the trade union body following the Melbourne Congress and decisions adopted by the Victorian and NSW Labor party annual conferences, it changed from conditional approval to outright opposition to compulsion. Whereas Council merely noted the Melbourne proceedings and left the issue for further consideration by the party at its own state conference, [1] the Adelaide unions reacted enthusiastically to the example set in the east [2] and later that month circularised all Labor parliamentarians

respectfully pointing out to them the resolution of the Council to oppose any member on the next plebiscite who dares to support the pernicious policy of conscription and to ascertain from them whether it is their intention to carry out the desire of the industrial workers, which is to oppose the conscription of males of military age, and also the new scheme of a citizens' levy which is being engineered by the capitalistic class of this country.

Members were given thirty days in which to respond, [3] but a collective reply of non-committal nature was returned by the PLP. [4] Development of this militant swing in opinion held significance second only to the formation of an organisation aimed at capturing control of the party.

Initiative to capitalise on union discontent was seized by Francis Walter Lundie, ^{chief} for many years of the AWU in South Australia. Never a good public speaker, [5] Lundie never attained public office outside the realm of municipal politics but excelled at the art of union organisation. Genuinely opposed to conscription - as Adelaide branch delegate to the AWU National Convention Lundie seconded the motion pronouncing that union absolutely opposed to compulsory military service on principle [6] - he would have been well aware of the efforts by the NSW union branches to compel more favorable reception of their demands

[1] Ibid. 8 June, 1916.

[2] UTLC Minutes 2 June, 1916.

[3] Ibid. 30 June, 1916.

[4] Letter by F.S. Wallis MLA to Register 12 October, 1916.

[5] As attested to by a union colleague who was - S.R. Whitford. Memoirs Autobiographical MS, 1958.S.A. Archives.

(6) Report of AWU National Convention 28 January 1916.

by gaining greater influence on Labor party organs. While the S.A. situation was on a far smaller scale compared to the insurrection brewing in Sydney, the tactical principles were similar. One month before state conference Lundie called for a pre-conference caucus of union delegates '... with a view to coming to a common understanding in regard to all industrial questions to come before the conference'. [1] Immediate countermeasures by the government resulted: Blundell, who was emerging as Vaughan's chief apologist and union troubleshooter, issued a circular advising against attendance and, while refraining from attacking the organiser, drew attention to the dangers inherent in such a step, the thin end of the wedge in Labor solidarity. 'We must not lose sight of the fact that the industrial vote alone is not sufficient to return candidates in various districts.' [2] On 15 August only 34 of some 100 invitees attended the meeting at the AWU office in Grote Street, but it was a start. In the contest for the chairmanship Lundie defeated the far more cautious TLC figure Hugh Gilmore and a sub-committee was then established to prepare recommendations concerning the conference agenda. At a subsequent meeting the committee reported back and its ^{was} advice/considered *seriatim*. Apropos the conscription and other military items it was suggested that the section move as their united view

That this conference, being absolutely opposed to the conscription of human life, hereby pledges itself to refuse to endorse the nomination of any candidate for parliament, state or federal, who favors in any form the principle of military or industrial compulsion. [3]

While the majority of delegates supported the item some favored leaving the whole matter to the Prime Minister and others were inclined to accept conscription provided equality of sacrifice was established in the form of wealth tax. Further meetings left only six business items to a free vote and a ticket was arranged for the annual executive elections. [4]

[1] Advertiser, 9 August, 1916.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Daily Herald, 23 August, 1916.

[4] Ibid. 29, 31 August, 1916.

Several contrasts with the NSW situation may be made. Most obvious is the small size of the industrial section in South Australia, some 34 of the nearly 200 accredited conference delegates, who were themselves unable to achieve unanimity on such a crucial issue as conscription. No formal platform, constitution or rules appear to have been devised and the group was evidently viewed as being purely ad hoc rather than having long term functions. [1] In distinction to Holman's vain bid to rally Sydney Labor Council support the counterstroke by the Vaughan government was successful in minimising active dissent, indicative perhaps of the less advanced stage of union disillusionment and the still powerful effect of calls for unity in South Australia. As a measure of Lundie's frustration was his public jeering at Blundell when the Minister was mollifying Labor critics at the party's regular stand in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. [2] Nevertheless there was some cause for cautious optimism in the reaction of the UTLC to an invitation from Hughes to suspend its judgement on conscription until he could personally brief its officers on federal policy. [3] Led by C.R. Baker, newly elected TLC President and sympathiser of the industrialist section, a small delegation journeyed to Melbourne, had several sessions with the Prime Minister and witnessed his announcement of the referendum in the House. Baker remained unimpressed, giving no undertakings on behalf of his organisation and Hughes added the S.A. state conference to his itinerary of Labor bodies he would personally appeal before for support of his policy. [4]

When state conference opened in Adelaide on 4 September, it became apparent that the industrialists could dispose of some 80 - 90 votes on major questions, which was only a minority but substantial enough to enable capture of all but one position on the agenda committee. [5]

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- [1] Lundie's own story of the section is the fullest single account to date. Ibid. 6 November, 1916.
 - [2] Ibid. 21 August, 1916.
 - [3] W.M. Hughes - T.B. Merry 29 August, 1916. UTLC Minutes 22 September, 1916.
 - [4] The Premier, Crawford Vaughan, saw eye to eye with Hughes on the war - Advertiser 5 September 1916 and had been in Melbourne at the same time, where Hughes most likely secured the overture, though the S.A. state executive claimed that the invitation was an independent and unanimous initiative of its own devising. Report State President W.C. Melbourne, 1916 State Conference Minutes.
 - [5] Register 5 September, 1916.

Chaired by Baker the committee reported in favor of holding the conscription debate midway through the week rather than waiting for Hughes to arrive on Saturday. Blundell, the sole non-industrialist member, entered a minority report condemning this as an anti-parliamentary section stratagem and suggesting the debate on this topic be held over: this was approved by conference 107 - 83. Hughes arrived on Friday, 8 September dogged by two eastern state opponents, [1] and immediately plunged into a three hour address that afternoon before answering written questions. His remarks echoed those delivered to the House of Representatives on 30 August - the military situation had changed over the last year and troop reinforcement was now imperative; new taxation proposals would be used to compel equable contributions of wealth; Joseph Cook and the Liberals could win a commission to implement conscription if Labor did not act. When Hughes subsided Vaughan moved that conference express '... its confidence in the Prime Minister and in the Federal Labor Government', explicitly denying that this implied any commitment for or against conscription. Lundie objected strongly, moving a more neutrally couched motion of thanks but after excited debate in which Vaughan repeated his assurance conference carried his motion by 123 - 88. [2]

South Australian policy on compulsory service was decided that evening. The Port Adelaide Electorate Committee provided a motion drafted some time previously closely following Victorian and NSW party resolutions in directing penalties against conscriptionist parliamentarians and conferring absolute discretion upon state executive

[1] Senator Ferricks and Maurice Blackburn. The industrialists failed in a bid to have them seated as regular delegates. Ibid. 11 September, 1916.

[2] Lundie's statement ibid. 1 November 1916. Hugh Gilmore supported the contention that an assurance was given through the chair that adoption of the motion would not pre-empt a later decision by full debate on conscription. Daily Herald 13 November 1916.

to withhold endorsements. [1] Several amendments were then moved; one from Vaughan, 'That in regard to the Federal Government's proposals, this Conference approves of the matter being submitted to a referendum of the electors,' was explained by its author as leaving the matter solely to the conscience of industrialists but was rejected as 'too drastic' a formulation. From the other extreme a further amendment, 'That this Conference protests against the adoption of conscription as it will be against the spirit of Australian democracy and full of dangers to the liberties of the people', was also defeated. [2] The final compromise drafted at the end of the evening by Baker, 'That this Conference supports the taking of a referendum but is opposed to the conscription of human life', proved acceptable and conference adjourned the next day without further reference to the matter, leaving much other business incomplete. [3]

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- [1] Viz. (a) This conference solemnly pledges itself to oppose by all lawful means the conscription of human life for military service abroad and directs all affiliated Unions and Leagues to take immediate steps to oppose all Labor members who vote for or otherwise support conscription, so as to make this matter a clear cut issue between the forces of democracy and despotism, where Unions or Leagues fail to take such action the central executive is hereby instructed to refuse, under any circumstances, to endorse conscriptionist candidates.

(b) That it be an instruction to the delegates on the interstate executive to oppose at all costs the policy of conscription.

(c) That copies of the foregoing resolution be sent to the central bodies of the Labor organisations of each State, the Acting Prime Minister (Senator Pearce) and the Minister of Customs (Mr. Tudor)'. 1916 State Conference Minutes. It was almost identical to the resolution of the NSW state conference on 8 May.

- [2] Paper entitled 'Business transacted at annual conference, 1916', appended to 1916 State Conference Minutes.
- [3] No reliable single record of the conference exists. The Minutes and appended documents and clippings are laconic and provide an abbreviated account. This version has been supplemented by reports in the Daily Herald, Advertiser and Register, plus other accounts, to obtain what appears to be the correct sequence.

In every way this treatment was unfortunate, producing a compromise which, on strict interpretation, would leave the referendum one for individual decision and not party policy as in Western Australia; this would have been adequate had the moderate consensus in the west been present in South Australia - it was not. Later, when the industrialists seized upon the issue as a weapon to use against the PLP leadership, the intention of conference became a crucial point of a debate which on balance justified the pro-conscriptionists. One delegate recalled: 'I do remember that the Chairman, Mr. Gilmore, shouted above the din of voices: "Everyone is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience", or words to that effect'. [1] Gilmore himself, who was not then in the chair, which was still occupied by W.C. Melbourne, claimed later though that 'The ex-President's ruling was given amid the confusion occasioned by delegates returning to their seats after the division and was not heard by many present'. [2] This ambiguity was vociferously exploited by both sides acting upon interpretations which were to prove irreconcilable and Labor's response to the referendum in South Australia was divided accordingly.

Although a majority of PLP members, led by the Premier, advocated a Yes vote it is not clear how sincerely motivated they were. Butterfield, one of the anti-conscriptionist minority, stated that a great many had been persuaded to support it for electoral reasons; '...members of Parliament thought it would be a popular thing and that it would be carried by 10 to 1. His own idea was that that idea had prevailed with members: he did not believe that there were many conscientious conscriptionists amongst them at all.' [3] If so, the PLP stood doubly condemned - for not accurately judging public opinion and for setting such an erroneous judgement against the opinion of organised unionism to which, industrialists argued, the parliamentarians

[1] S.R. Whitford, Memoirs op.cit.

[2] Daily Herald 13 November, 1916.

[3] Report ALP Special Federal Conference, 1916, p.15.

owed greater allegiance than to the electorate at large. When the PLP group was vindicated by the referendum result they won the allegiance of otherwise moderate party opinion. [1] Since June, 1916 the Daily Herald had been edited by Henry Kneebone, generally considered sympathetic to the union cause but policy during the campaign was equivocal and space was allotted to both sides. Kneebone maintained an embarrassed editorial neutrality right up to the poll despite union requests for a more forthright stand. [2]

Interstate contacts proved important from the earliest stage, when anti-conscription campaigning was stimulated by the arrival of Tom Miller, organiser of the Trade Union Anti-Conscription Executive in Melbourne and a pacifist of Christian-Socialist beliefs for many years. Finding a very quiet situation in Adelaide after his experiences in Melbourne and Sydney, Miller was encouraged by Frank Lundie with facilities and support, engaging initially in small scale union meetings and addresses. [3] Only on 28 September was an Anti-Conscription Council formed at a meeting of unionists chaired by Baker of the UTLC after a suggestion by the Tramways' Union. [4] Lionel Hill MLA led a group of anti-conscriptionist parliamentary colleagues who protested their loyalty to the cause and Hill was elected President of the body which then unanimously resolved to fight for a No vote.⁵ Official meetings began on 1 October, a manifesto was issued and advertising started, while the services of interstate speakers were utilised at the major rallies.⁶ Exaggerated though the influence of the

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- [1]. A point established by Gibson, 'The Conscription Issue in S.A.' pp. 49-50, 79.
 - [2] UTLC Minutes 20 October, 1916.
 - [3] T.J. Miller, Some Reflections, Melbourne, 1938. pp.65-71. UTLC Minutes 14 July, 1916.
 - [4] The UTLC pledged support in advance by 55-12. Ibid. 22 September, 1916.
 - [5] Register 29 September, 1916.
 - (6) Prominent amongst such visitors were Miller, E.F. Russell, Secretary of the Federated Agricultural Implement Makers' Union, and A. Lewis, organiser of the Victorian Carters' and Drivers. The Register singled out Miller and Russell in particular as instruments of eastern state subversion of an otherwise pacific Labor movement. Ibid 27 November 1916.

predominantly Victorian propagandisers may have been by the conservative press, the reassurance they provided to Adelaide antis that they were part of a far wider and respectable movement must have been heartening against the influence wielded by the Premier, his cabinet, the PLP majority and the irresolution of state executive. A similar type of reassurance was singularly lacking in Western Australia for example, with serious consequences in that state. South Australian propaganda was closely modelled on that of the eastern states; the antis argued that voluntaryism was sufficient if given proper support and opportunity; conscription was both undemocratic and anti-working class; it was essential to uphold the white Australia policy by preventing importation of colored labor and preserving domestic capacity to repel any colored invasion. [1] South Australia registered a majority against conscription on referendum day of 119,236 to 87,924. [2]

The split in South Australia

Once the forces in the party polarised over the conscription referendum the industrialists seized the opportunity presented, not only to fight for defeat of conscription but in the long run to dispose of the 'black-coated brigade' and its baneful influence on the workers' party. State executive could not be cajoled into pursuing a hard line interpretation, so the industrialists took the initiative where they could make use of their numbers. On 12 October Council declared by a four-fifths majority:

Seeing that the annual Labor conference held September, 1916 has declared its opposition to the conscription of human life this Council condemns the action of the Labor members in deciding to agitate for an affirmative vote in the forthcoming referendum because for a Labor representative to act contrary to the decision of the annual conference is violating the basic principle of the Labor movement - majority rule.

[1] ACC manifesto Register 4 October, 1916; see also reports of ACC rallies and demonstrations ibid. 2, 24 October, 1916.

[2] A close analysis of voting patterns is provided by Gibson, 'The Conscription Issue in South Australia'.

An amendment seeking to give Council members 'the fullest liberty of action ... without any prejudice whatever' was brushed aside in favor of this stringent reading of the conference resolution, [1] but even the unanimous support of Council could not enforce this upon any parliamentarian. Statutory power for upholding discipline lay under Rule 44 enabling anyone to lay charges of disloyalty or prejudicial conduct against individuals but would necessitate lengthy and involved proceedings. Furthermore it would cast the complainants in the role of vindictive disrupters and be unreliable under all but optimum conditions. The solution adopted was more subtle and offered a better chance of success: Adelaide unions had already approved the first part of the NSW policy threatening to oppose conscriptionist politicians at preselections, [2] and at the Council meeting of 12 October two unionists obtained suspension of standing orders and moved that plebiscites (the local term for party preselections) be held immediately for federal and state seats. Several speakers opposed and the motion had been talked out without result. [3] In the following week the industrial section appropriated the strategy and at a caucus meeting decided to put up three proposals at a special Council meeting.

1. Obtaining validation of the interpretation that the conference decision binds every member of the party to oppose conscription and a declaration that all who do not comply may be found disloyal.
2. To obtain a ruling that all electorates and local committees affiliated to the Council are obliged to work and vote against the referendum.
3. Initiate the whole preselection process and declare no-confidence in state executive supporters of conscription. [4]

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- [1] ULP Council Minutes 12 October, 1916. Register 13 October, 1916.
 - [2] UTLC Minutes 2, 30 June, 1916.
 - [3] ULP Council Minutes 12 October, 1916.
 - [4] Register 19 October, 1916.

Even before the referendum had been taken the industrialists were seeking to force the issue with the parliamentarians, one spokesman being widely quoted:

While the conscription issue is hot we want to see where our relations begin and end with the present Labor parliamentarians who have flouted the conference determination ... This is the time to deal with these chaps, while the conscription issue is keen and before we have time to cool off. [1]

State executive realised the implications and succeeded in stalling the proposed special call of Council until after the referendum, Lundie blaming unidentified 'interests' at work for this frustration. [2] When the Council did assemble with 314 delegates on 2 November it was larger than a state conference. A preceding caucus of industrialists established their own strength at around 100 delegates, but on the floor of Council an equally large group of uncommitted and previously moderate delegates supported the stand taken by the section. Lundie and Baker cojointly sponsored a motion calling for plebiscites for metropolitan state and federal seats and for country districts to be requested to act likewise. Debate was gagged after the minimum of two replies, [3] and the motion passed 198 - 100. The industrial leaders then secured early deadlines for the plebiscites and, rather than leave the necessary duties to the state executive, secured their own nominee as returning officer - J. Smith, Assistant-Secretary of the AWU. State President Hugh Gilmore ruled the motion calling for condemnations for disloyalty out of order as conflicting with the

[1] Ibid. Gibson, 'The Conscription Issue in South Australia'. pp.52-3.

[2] Daily Herald 6 November, 1916.

[3] One report states that blows were exchanged on one heated moment between L.L. Hill and C. Goode, Commissioner of Crown Lands. Register 3 November, 1916.

September conference decision and the second was discharged as obviously redundant. [1] The industrialists next turned their attentions to the state executive, which contained both conscriptionists and antis.[2] With its natural favoring of unity the executive occupied a middle ground between the PLP, which happened to be nearly three-quarters conscriptionist, and the Council in which the industrial section had won control of the numbers. During the campaign executive refrained from supporting either the Premier or the Anti-Conscription Council, endorsed Hughes as FPLP Leader after his expulsion by the NSW Labor party but generally ducked any firm commitment. [3] Consequently, after a debate which spanned an adjournment until the following evening and in which those affected defended their actions unsuccessfully, Council endorsed the industrialist censure: 'That a vote of no confidence be passed on those members of the executive who supported conscription; further that Messrs. Anstey and Birrell be asked to resign from the Federal Executive'.[4] For the benefit of the preselection bodies a

[1] ULP Council Minutes Special Meeting 2 November, 1916.

[2] Of those who can be classified, Hugh Gilmore, the President, was a moderate opponent of conscription; Hill, Junior Vice-President, was leader of the Anti-Conscription Council and G.E. Yates MHR seems to have earlier favored conscription but was loyal to the Party. Past-President W.C. Melbourne was in favor of compulsion and Reg Blundell and Henry Jackson were both members of the Vaughan cabinet. Treasurer F.W. Birrell, who came to also fulfill the functions of the absent secretary, Olifent, appears to have supported the affirmative cause.

[3] Executive Report, ULP Council Minutes Special Meeting 2 November, 1916.

[4] ULP Council Minutes Adjourned Special Meeting 3 November, 1916. A clause voting no confidence in conscriptionists on the Daily Herald Board was struck out - those malefactors did not escape however and a special resolution calling for their resignation was later passed.

resolution listing the pro-compulsion parliamentarians by name and declaring them disloyal to the state conference decision on conscription was approved. However a motion that the seven loyal PLP members be recognised as the only Labor representatives was declared ultra vires by Gilmore, [1] so while the PLP leadership was still within the party, the preselection process had been set in motion and the weeding out could follow.

The subjects of this coup fully realised the fate awaiting them: 'Under present conditions the plebiscite cannot be a calm expression of opinion of the rank and file, but it is a magnificent opportunity for people to vent their spleen on some particular members of Parliament and for some aspirants to reach the height of their ambition'. [2] C. R. Baker confirmed their fears; now the industrialists were 'top dogs', he boasted, 'They have no intention to be satisfied (sic) with having frightened the offenders, but are determined to see the thing right out'. [3] Vaughan gathered a group of close supporters and drew up a manifesto, which was then signed by 29 state and federal parliamentarians announcing their refusal to submit their names for the plebiscite [4] and forcing Gilmore to issue a rejoinder. [5] In short order though, the FPLP miscreants were removed from the field by their own action. Adelaide unions had already been notified that their Melbourne counterparts favoured 'leading action' in preventing conciliation with the conscriptionists, [6] and when E. J. Russell arrived in Adelaide again to address the local Labor bodies he obtained state executive approval for a special federal conference; moreover executive instructed S.A. FPLP members to repudiate Hughes and Council selected an

[1] Ibid.

[2] R. P. Blundell in Register, 7 November, 1916.

[3] Ibid. 9 November, 1916.

[4] Daily Herald 11 November, 1916.

[5] Ibid. 13 November.

[6] Ibid. 6 November, 1916.

anti-conscriptionist federal conference delegation of 3 PLP and 3 unionist members, so instructed. [1] When the federal caucus split on 14 November only Yates and Senator O'Loughlin remained loyal; seven others threw in their lot with Hughes. [2] Hereafter the battle in S.A. became one of to what extent the state parliamentary party was to split.

Vaughan and his group's refusal to submit themselves for preselection 18 months before the next scheduled state election was only a stop gap tactic; their hope for survival lay in postponing the plebiscite until the storm had abated and they had won a space in which to rehabilitate themselves with the organisation. Accordingly, they appealed to their staunchest base, the rural branches and moderate metropolitan branches and unions to reverse the decision. With the industrial section on guard against manipulations of defunct affiliates and other practices, [3] Baker was able to scorn this effort, with no more than ten out of over 330 affiliated bodies supporting the PLP leaders. [4] By the next Council meeting however some 26 organisations favoured some form of compromise and a motion for a debate on changing the preselection deadlines was talked out. [5] Thus encouraged the parliamentarians called a special meeting of Council by petition for 27 December to consider whether or not to entertain a motion for postponement of the dates, appealing once again for party solidarity. [6]

Some 211 delegates were accordingly distracted from their Christmas revelries to participate in a warm debate over whether to

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- [1] Executive report and ULP Council Minutes 9 November, 1916.
 - [2] Messrs. Poynton, Archibald and Dankel - the last of German birth who had wisely kept a very low profile during the conscription campaign - with Senators Senior, Story, Guthrie and Newland. Register 16 November, 1916.
 - [3] Daily Standard, 6 December, 1916.
 - [4] Register, 1 December, 1916.
 - [5] ULP Council Minutes 14 December, 1916. Register 15 December.
 - [6] Ibid. 27 December, 1916. Although there was some contention about it, it was eventually decided that rule 14 applied, preventing debating of a Council decision within three months of its approval unless a special call was granted and could only be rescinded by a two-thirds majority of that special meeting.

permit a review of the decision - the industrial section holding the line on a division of 110-100. With ill-concealed reluctance Gilmore could only announce that the plebiscites would be held as originally specified. [1] Only one card remained for the parliamentarians to play, the calling of a special state conference which executive granted almost immediately. [2] Acting-Secretary Birrell circularised the party to this effect before even Council had time to ratify the decision. [3] Presented with this fait accompli the industrialists in Council refused to endorse the decision, [4] but were constitutionally unable to prevent it once the executive took it upon its own responsibility. [5] They were capable though of ensuring a maximisation of their strength. With some bravado Birrell had announced 'Our object is to have a thorough clean-up in the movement and the Labor party will, for the time being, go into the melting pot'. [6]

[1] ULP Council Minutes Special Meeting 27 December, 1916; Daily Standard 29 December, 1916.

[2] Register 4 January, 1917.

[3] Advertiser 26 January 1917. Briefly, the agenda circulated was very broadly defined: to consider the federal conference delegation report, to deal with the positions of federal and state parliamentary parties and all events pursuant thereto and to prepare for the next scheduled federal conference.

[4] Ibid. 18 January, 1917.

[5] Advertiser, 26 January, 1917.

[6] Ibid. 16 January, 1917.

To be scrupulously fair the executive laid down the principle of representation at conference on a basis of strict proportion to membership size. [1] Taking advantage of this provision the AWU obtained its highest proportion of delegates so far, 10% of the total of close to 300. [2] As a further insurance the section captured all three positions on the credentials committee, [3] giving it power to foil packing by the opposing faction or its appropriation of loose proxies.

This advantage proved useful almost immediately when on 22 January state executive unanimously [4] decided to circularise all PLP members who had signed the November manifesto to ascertain their attitude to the Nationalist Labor party. [5] Only 12 of the PLP members quizzed offered replies, so the credentials committee withheld tickets of accreditation from all parliamentarians who had been nominated as delegates, pending conference examination of the replies and determination of the situation. As the industrialists would dominate conference this time if they held their strength, it would prove possible to exclude the most dangerous PLP members altogether. [6] For their part the parliamentary group, meeting to decide tactics, divided between those favoring immediate formation of a local breakaway party and others holding hope

[1] Ibid. 16 January, 1917.

[2] Hirst, op.cit. There were 28 AWU delegates in all.

[3] ULP Council Minutes 18 January, 1917.

[4] Including the ministers Blundell and Jackson, part of the Vaughan group from the beginning of the rift. Register 12 November, 1916.

[5] Advertiser 9 February; C.Vaughan's statement Register 13 February 1917. This referred to the federal incarnation of the breakaway FPLP faction which intended to field candidates against its late colleagues, some South Australian parliamentarians having already assisted municipal candidates against endorsed Labor ones, Daily Standard 29 December, 1916. Vaughan himself participated in the formation of National Labor in Melbourne and was South Australian representative on its federal executive. Register. 12 February, 1917.

[6] Document outlining industrialist strategy, adopted probably at their 10 February pre-conference session. Register 21 February 1917.

for some form of reconciliation. [1] State executive attempted meanwhile to obtain the services of an external arbitrator in the person of Frank Tudor, to explain Labor's attitude to the schismatics, further participation in recruiting and other vexed questions but pressure of federal business intervened. [2] South Australians would have to resolve their own differences.

On the same day that conference opened, Monday 12 February, the state executive met and decided to permit attendance of the parliamentarians excluded by the credentials committee. Acceptance of this decision was another thing though; when Vaughan and his close supporters - Blundell, Jackson, Coneybeer and others - attempted to enter they were prevented by the door keeper until Gilmore hurried down from the chair and personally secured their admittance. Undismayed by this development the industrialist leaders Lundie and Barker moved: 'That Mr. Vaughan and all other members of parliament who did not carry out the mandate of the September Conference be asked to place in the hands of this Conference a written assurance that they will abide by the decisions of Conference. Failing this they will be asked to leave the room.' [3] This challenge, if sustained, would have bound the ALP leaders to the direction of the industrialists and was totally unacceptable to the Premier. After debate had raged and the motion carried by a substantial majority, Vaughan and his group made brief statements and walked out. [4] The industrialists' plan to avoid individual expulsions and force out only their main enemies in the party had been achieved without having

[1] Ibid. 9 February, 1917.

[2] Ibid. 12 February, 1917.

[3] Minutes 1917 Special Conference.

[4] Crawford Vaughan's statement, repeated for the benefit of the press, clearly established the point at issue over which the PLP group broke away from the party. The resolution was 'intolerant and vindictive'; 'I told them straight I would not sign, first because the motion contained a vote of censure against us, and secondly because I had signed the platform of the party prior to the last elections, and was in honor bound to carry out that platform during the life of this Parliament, and any alteration of that platform could not take effect until the next general elections. It was utterly undemocratic to single out a few of the Labor Party for expulsion because they were members of Parliament, because if they were to be condemned, so should those of the rank and file of the party who voted for conscription.' Register 13 February 1917.

to use the preselection instrument. [1]

That the industrialists did not intend a mass purge against all pro-conscriptionists but were concerned to assert the authority of the movement over the PLP 'black-coated brigade' was confirmed by the debate over the late federal conference at the following sitting. Gilmore ruled that a motion for adoption of the S.A. delegates' report and endorsement of the Scullin resolution would necessitate wholesale expulsions of all conscription supporters. His ruling when disputed was upheld by 176-65; eventually it was decided merely to receive the document. Cavanagh and Lundie then persuaded conference to expunge all reference to the ruling from the official report to prevent people drawing the logical conclusion, that the industrialists' indignation had been selectively applied. [2] They desired to cleanse the party, not destroy it. Industrialist supremacy was underlined shortly after the Vaughan group had left by a decision to hold evening sessions of conference only, a measure decided on by the section's pre-conference caucus as a precaution to maintain optimum attendance by their bloc.

[1] Resistance had been encountered in some of the affiliates to the early preselection, some organisations returning the papers to the party head office without distributing them to the membership or left blank in protest. Advertiser 25 January, 1917. The post-special conference state executive, led by Lundie himself, later disclaimed any intention of indiscriminate use of the weapon: 'It is believed that if the legislators affected had allowed themselves to be nominated in the plebiscites nearly all of them would have been successful. Strong resentment was felt concerning two or three only, and these had been markedly offensive in the conduct of the conscription campaign'. Manifesto ULP executive, Register 2 March, 1917.

[2] Minutes 1917 Special Conference.

On top of the PLP walkout and the manifestly collusive origin of the industrialist majority, many country delegates left in disgust after the first day rather than waste whole days disconsolately patronising Adelaide public houses while knowing that they were outnumbered upon any future vote. This left the field securely to the metropolitan-based forces and underlined the wiping out of the special privileges accorded the rural wing since 1904. [1]

Next day a spill of executive positions was called for and all candidates for the presidency other than Lundie stood down. Lundie's star was now at its ascendant; he was concurrently General President of the AWU, Secretary of the Adelaide Branch, AWU, President of the ULP and in first place on the party's Senate ticket. Most on the industrialist executive ticket were returned, the only notable omission being failure to unseat the state secretary, J.H.S. Olifent, and his stand-in Birrell, although this was for special reasons. [2] Little remained but the registering of the decisions of the pre-conference session: opinion favoring scrapping of the plebiscites was crushed and the declaration of parliamentary disloyalty affirmed. [3] Collective hostility to the federal plank on compulsory military training was declared and participation in the recruiting campaign left to the consciences of party members. [4] Finally, conference agreed to alter the record of the September, 1916 conference to retrospectively legitimise the industrialists' interpretation of the crucial conscription

[1] Daily Herald, 12-16 February; Register 21 February, 1917. 295 delegates were confirmed in the final report of the credentials committee on opening day; on the last day at the end of the week only 180 attended. Ibid. 17 February, 1917.

[2] The principle involved was an established Labor one that servicemen's jobs should be preserved while they were on active service. As Olifent was still on indefinite leave in the army C.R. Baker was persuaded to withdraw his arranged candidacy for secretary. Minutes 1917 Special Conference 15 February. Birrell remained in the party after the split, seemingly un-penalised.

[3] Ibid. 14 February.

[4] Ibid. 15 February.

resolution, a provision not publicised but inevitably leaked by a disgruntled delegate. [1] Party history would henceforth be the history of the victorious faction. [2]

Conscription in South Australia provided the issue needed by a resentful unionist section to mount an insurrection against the established party leadership. While interstate support and assistance had been invaluable, the conscription issue within the S.A. party was fought out on the basis of pre-existing lines of cleavage and concerned, ultimately, control within the party rather than compulsory service per se or more base motives such as careerism. While the party failed to gain office for another seven years after the split and formation of a Liberal, then Liberal-Nationalist state government, the essential point had been won. Indicative of the crux of the dispute was the resolution on the final day of the 1917 special conference, suggested by the Sturt Electoral Committee and going beyond what the industrialists had formulated as necessary; 'That all resolutions carried at conference shall be binding on Labor members of Parliament providing that they to not refer to any planks on the party's platform'. [3] Within a month the resolution was quietly abandoned as unworkable after representations by the loyal PLP to the new state executive, [4] but its approval at all was the significant fact. Structurally, the 1917 special conference marked final abolition of the preferment given to the country wing and inauguration of a long era of AWU/metropolitan-based, dominance. It marked a turnover of elites and henceforth the South Australian party would be as radical as the AWU and its supporters were inclined to make it. [5]

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- [1] Ibid. 16 February; Register, 21 February, 1917. Alteration consisted of addition of the emphasised words to the original resolution: 'That this conference supports the principle of a referendum but is opposed to the conscription of human life'.
 - [2] For example, the series of newspaper articles later published by N.J.O. Makin as A Progressive Democracy op.cit.
 - [3] Minutes 1917 Special Conference 16 February. The modifying clause was added as an amendment to the bald motion.
 - [4] Executive report ULP Council Minutes 8, 19 March, 1917.
 - [5] D. Hopgood, 'The View from Head Office. The South Australian Labor Political Machine, 1917-30'. Politics 6, 1 May, 1971 pp.70-78.

Recovery: the South Australian Labor party, 1917-18

Apart from the federal members, no parliamentarians were expelled from the Labor party in S.A. for support of conscription or for casting in their lot with another political party, as in the other states. The principle involved in dealing with the Vaughan faction however was much the same as elsewhere, being the crucial issue of authority in the party and the willingness of the politicians to accept the decisions of the majority of the membership. After the special state conference the PLP schismatics became involved in organising a breakaway party with the encouragement of Pearce from Melbourne [1] and a struggle resulted for the allegiance of the rank and file, which, as in the equally badly divided Western Australian party, was eventually resolved conclusively in favour of the official organisation. Divisions within the remainder of the ULP once the Vaughan clique had left and the supremacy of the AWU/urban union majority asserted were not deeply antagonistic, though the Daily Herald undoubtedly protested this too vehemently at the time.

There was no leader - if there was even a party at the (February, 1917) conference - who was altogether opposed to the industrial aims and objects. Some of the delegates were forced into a position of apparent opposition at times because they could not go as far as the extreme industrialists. [2]

After the split there was no doubting, nevertheless, who was in charge, and the secure tenure of the new leadership had repercussions for South Australian Labor policies during the remaining part of the war.

Following an earlier decision by the UTLC concerning participation in the voluntary recruiting campaign, [3] special conference also declined to appoint Labor representatives on the State Recruiting Committee and left the question of recruiting up to individual consciences. Conference also decided to instruct its federal ALP delegation to oppose retention of compulsory military training in the ALP defence plank. [4]

[1] Pearce papers, NLA B8 213/2/28.

[2] Cutting, n.d., Volume of clippings and leaflets, 1916-17. ALP head office, Adelaide Trades Hall.

[3] Minutes UTLC 12, 26 January, 1917.

[4] Several amendments were defeated. Minutes ULP conference 15 February, 1917.

Immediately following the conference, efforts were directed towards minimising the effects of the National Labor party organisation's appeal and the Daily Herald was saved from the hands of the opposing faction.

[1] Co-operation between the sections of the party was secured by formation of a combined ULP-UTLC committee to deal with further attempts at imposing conscription, after close contact with interstate Labor representatives. [2] Subsequently, a combined committee report in August, influenced by communications from Sydney and Melbourne, [3] accepted the scheme devised by the Sydney Labor Council for concerted opposition to any second appeal on the issue. When the party's second conference, its regular annual conference, was held in September, 1917, the Commonwealth Director-General of Recruiting, Donald Mackinnon, was admitted to speak to delegates and was treated to a motion of thanks carried by acclamation. Conference unanimously carried a loyal motion declaring fealty to the cause of the Allies and hoping 'that we are on the threshold of a glorious victory and lasting peace'. [4] More to the point however were later, separate motions calling for insertion of a plank opposing compulsory military service in the ALP federal platform, another opposed to further compulsory military training and a third stating that, in the event of any war, all means of transport and production should revert to government control for the duration. The NSW party's peace plank was considered *seriatim* and adopted. Council had already endorsed its being cabled to the British Labor Party conference as representing ALP policy. [5]

Consequently, when Hughes' second conscription referendum was announced in November, the state executive already possessed contingent authority to sponsor a No campaign. As compared to the previous occasion, the executive led the anti-conscription forces, with solid backing from the rest of the movement. The 1917 referendum saw a reduced majority returned for the No case, but this was largely due to federal government-

[1] Executive report, ULP Council Minutes 8 March, 1917 and ibid. 10 January, 1918.

[2] Minutes UTLC 15 June, 27 July, 1917.

[3] Adopted by the ULP, Minutes ULP 9 August, 1917 and the unions, Minutes UTLC 10 August, 1917.

[4] Minutes ULP conference, September, 1917.

[5] Minutes ULP Council 9 August, 1917.

imposed franchise restrictions. [1]

South Australia and conscription

	1916	1917
YES	87,924	86,663
NO	119,236	106,364

The Adelaide unions were to remain the chief radical influence on policy. Although, after repeated requests, the UTLC finally delegated one of its few ardent recruiting supporters to the State Recruiting Committee, [2] it reacted strongly to the attendance, at short notice and before Council consideration was possible, of their president F. D. Williams at the Governor-General's recruiting conference. [3] At its next meeting, a censure of the TLC executive for accepting was lost only by 24-22 votes and Council refused to consider the president's report, [4] later challenging the federal and state governments to implement the decisions arrived at by conference. State executive had proved to be a little more accommodating, having earlier met Mackinnon privately and made suggestions as to how the recruiting campaign could best be carried out. The tenor of the reforms mentioned implied support for the campaign but suspicion of the federal government and others backing the recruiting drive. [5] These points formed the basis of South Australian complaints at the Governor-General's conference in Melbourne during April; Frank Lundie attended in place of Lionel Hill, with J. Jelley, MLC and Council adopted their subsequent report and urged the non-Labor forces to carry out their undertakings. [6]

South Australian delegates to the federal conference in Perth were fairly inconspicuous in the debates on the war, Tom Grealy, Norman Makin and Stan Whitford being the only three representatives from the

[1] Gibson, 'The Conscription Issue in South Australia.' op. cit.

[2] Minutes UTLC 8 March, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 18 April, 1918.

[4] Ibid. special meeting, 3, 17 May, 1918.

[5] Executive report, Minutes ULP Council 14 February, 1918.

[6] Ibid. special meeting, 2 May, 1918.

state. Apart from the retention of compulsory training, they had little difficulty in accepting the compromises reached [1] and had their own resolution, a variation of the NSW peace plank, accepted for the debate on the attitude to the war. At state conference in September, 1918 the Perth resolutions were endorsed, although a bid was made by the AWU delegates to oppose all compulsory training rather than just that for youths below 21 years of age. [2] More difficulty was encountered over the attitude on the war and recruiting. John Gunn, MLC and Senator O'Loughlen moved that instead of accepting the full federal recommendation, the party instead reaffirm its previous decision to leave recruiting a matter for individual conscience. Although not directly spelled out, it was clear that many genuinely supported the voluntary war effort and feared that recruitment and the ALP's reputation would both suffer if support for the war was to be made conditional. Conference president, Lionel Hill, staunchly believed in the war [3] and ruled that, contrary to Makin's insistence, the South Australian Labor party was not obliged to hold a plebiscite on the federal policy as recommended. The motion to this effect was carried with only one dissenter, an incorrect ruling considered a breach of federal authority by the next ALP conference. Thus S.A. avoided further painful wrangles over recruiting at the slight cost of admonishment by the federal party.

Despite the not inconsiderable impact of the conscription split in South Australia, the party did not become the source of any radical innovations during or after the war. The UTLC, most consistently radically-inclined section, had merely kept pace with developments in eastern state unions and indigenous left wing bodies proved to possess little influence on the movement. The vehicle used for enforcing a militant conscription policy by the chief unions in 1916-7 did not survive after its original purpose had been fulfilled. Protests against the industrialists' caucus had been made at the 1917 annual conference [4] and there was no reason once the parliamentarians had been soundly defeated, as far as Lundie and his principal aides were concerned, to continue its activities, unlike the position in New South Wales. Lundie was himself succeeded as party president in 1917-8 by Lionel Hill, and

[1] Report of federal delegates, Ibid. 18 July, 1918.

[2] Minutes ULP Conference 13 September, 1918.

[3] Ibid. Presidential address.

[4] Minutes ULP Conference 10 September, 1917.

then a succession of similarly moderate figures through into the 'twenties, most of whom were AWU men. With the end of the war Labor in South Australia reverted to its more accustomed tranquil state.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LABOR AND THE WAR

'In the West the position was quite different'.

A. McCallum, general secretary, ALF.

Report special ALP federal conference, 1916, p.8.

Alone of the Australian Labor parties the Australian Labor Federation in Western Australia failed to officially oppose conscription, either in 1916 or the following year after the party had split. External pressures predominated in causing the party to break up following the conscription crisis in what proved to be an object lesson in the problems of operating a federally united condominium of independent members. The dissimilarity of the Western Australian experience to those of its counterparts elsewhere has been well recognised, [1] attention being drawn particularly to the isolation of the community from eastern Australia, its homogeneously Anglo-Saxon composition and deep British Empire loyalty, the distinctly moderate spirit and consensus nature of the political community and respect for the established leaders. [2] To this might be added the relative economic stability during the war in W.A., where there was only a negligible variation of effective wage levels which consistently remained well above the Australian average. Such features affected the structure, policies and style of the W.A. Labor movement.

The Australian Labor Federation was a unique organisation combining political and industrial wings of the Labor movement within a single body. Its constituent units, the district councils, enjoyed a marked degree of autonomy, directly nominating and instructing individual members of the W.A. federal conference delegation for example and exercising close supervision over their representatives on the ALP Executive Committee (hereafter the state executive).

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- [1] Notably by J.R. Robertson in a pioneering study 'The Conscription Issue and the National Movement in West-Australia, June 1916-December 1917'. University Studies in Western Australian History 3, 3 October 1959 pp. 5-57 based upon his The Scaddan Government and the Conscription Crisis 1911-17 M.A. University of Western Australia, 1958.
 - [2] See remarks concerning W.A. by T. Metherell The Conscription Referenda, October 1916 and December 1917. Ph.D. Sydney, 1971.

This executive met at least monthly as the ruling authority between triennial state conferences, consisting of eight officials elected by ballot of all district council members, one representative each from the PLP and state members of the FPLP, and further delegates from the councils on the basis of size: one for the first 500 and one for each succeeding thousand members. Councils re-elected their delegates annually but were able to instruct or to withdraw individuals as desired. Only one, the Metropolitan District Council in Perth with which the state executive shared quarters, possessed a full-time secretary and there were no separate TLCs. Membership was overwhelmingly unionist, reflected in the composition of State conferences, and the party had been distinguished by originating the exercise of caucus control of parliamentary party leaders though the practice of election of cabinet ministers [1] - yet the ALF was resolutely moderate.

A state Labor government from 1911-16 under John Scaddan enjoyed basically amicable relations with the extra-parliamentary party, secure in a sustaining faith in political action relatively undiluted by socialist or syndicalist doctrines. Despite discontent over some industrial matters there was no active anti-parliamentary resentment as in other states and a W.A. Socialist Party from 1910, pursuing an entrism policy towards the ALF, included several prominent Labor names but met with little success. By the war its influence was imperceptible and several members became conscriptionists. Unions with the potential for a state-wide power base were split up geographically under a provision which compelled sections of the AWU, for example, to direct their allegiance to the territorially divided district councils instead of being able to wield a bloc vote at conference or on state executive [2].

[1] D. McHenry, 'Caucus over Cabinet. Pioneering in Western Australia'. University Studies in History and Economics 2, 3 September 1955 p.p. 32-47.

[2] Rules as endorsed Report ALF Congress May 1916.

When an opportunity was presented in late 1915 for an attack upon the PLP leadership for scandalous administrative practices it was allowed to pass and Scaddan's defeat in the House in July, 1916 was precipitated by disunity in PLP ranks. At both state executive and district council levels the reaction was to close ranks and in fact one of the later prominent anti-conscriptionists and nearest equivalent to a socialist leader, Don Cameron, resigned his own preselection for a state seat in favour of Scaddan for a resultant by-election. [1] Notwithstanding the numbers rejecting compulsory military service on principle there lacked a ready made basis for organised opposition in the west - no Peace Alliance framework or vigorous left wing or party faction capable of espousing the cause as a weapon in intra-party politics. Neither was there a lead from the PLP or state executive, with the consequence that conscription was not treated as part of a structural conflict within the ALF or as a matter for strong party leadership but as an issue of conscience only.

Misgivings over the Defence Act scheme had been registered prior to the war [2] and general reactions to the outbreak of hostilities in August, 1914 were summarised by state executive, blaming the German military caste for the conflict, distinguishing between it and the German working class, enjoining members not to succumb to 'racial hatred' and concluding that the duty of Labor was to ensure protection of the workers' interests, especially if and when peace was finally negotiated. [3]

[1] J.R. Robertson, 'The Internal Politics of State Labor in Western Australia, 1911-16'. L.H. 2 May, 1962, p.p. 48-75.

[2] For example, proposed amendments to the Act Report ALF Congress July 1913, pp. 88, 99.

[3] Annual report state executive, 1914 ALF state executive correspondence, file 84. This did not prevent bigotry against German-descended workers being exhibited by Fremantle waterside workers though.

Executive struck a resolution condemning the war off the list of items for consideration as state recommendations to the 1915 ALP federal conference but proposals for amendment of the Defence Act were forwarded to Adelaide, to be referred from there to the FPLP. [1] More significant was the difference apparent between the two major district councils which were to form the most moderate and most militant centres respectively in the ALF during 1916; the Metropolitan Council considered the defence system and offered 'no recommendation with regard to the principle of compulsion' (of men to be trained) while the Eastern Goldfields Council desired compulsory training to be used only in defence of Australia against invasion. [2] Mild protest against the war and to aspects of the Australian defence system were voiced in W.A. from the start but predominant opinion favored dutiful participation in the conflict.

During 1915 agitation for compulsory service overseas began amongst Universal Service League supporters but the PLP attitude was to curb this as premature and divisive [3] and state executive discouraged advances from local Peace Alliance enthusiasts. [4] Not unaware of gathering opposition to conscription in the eastern states the executive also twice declined invitations to participate at the Australian Anti-Conscription TUC in Melbourne during May, 1916, [5] preferring to leave the issue for decision by state conference which convened on 31 May at Kalgoorlie. Communications from the Victorian and N.S.W. Labor parties relating their resolutions against conscription were read to conference on 5 June when debate began on that subject over a private motion by Don Cameron closely following their example. An amendment followed favouring compulsory

[1] Minutes state executive 20 February 1915.

[2] Ibid.

[3] W.A. Parliamentary Debates LII Legislative Council
19 October, 1915 p.p. 1684-9; 17 November p. 2503.

[4] Minutes state executive 16 August, 1915.

[5] Ibid 17 April, 15 May 1916.

service in correspondence to proportionate sacrifices of wealth and, after preliminary skirmishing established the temper of delegates, Cameron watered down his proposal by removal of all mention of sanctions against parliamentarians, whom he accused of 'waiting to see which way the cat jumped'. In a debate ranging over three days Cameron's motion was defeated 58-8 and on the evening of 7 June a compromise was adopted 'That in the interests of the defence of Australia and the Empire, this Congress desires to express its confidence in the federal executive' [1]. A further amendment leaving the question to be decided by the federal government subject to a referendum was defeated 'by a large majority'.

This decision made sense only in the context of undertakings given earlier that year by the federal authorities when Alex. McCallum, general secretary of the ALF, attended the federal executive meeting in January, 1916 at Melbourne and taxed Hughes specifically on the conscription issue. The Prime Minister had been evasive but conceded that any action by his government or the FPLP as a whole could not bind the state parties and although refusing to agree to call a special federal conference if conscription was thought necessary, the federal president, Senator Givens, had assured delegates that if the government decided in favor of such a policy the executive would be summoned for consultation.[2] This passing of the buck by the ALF should have been tempered by the federal executive's record as a check upon the government but at the time seemed to avoid any substantial clash over what was as yet a hypothetical issue. When Hughes returned to Australia, neglected to consult the federal Labor machine and plunged on with the referendum, the Western Australian movement was embarrassed by its irresolution and a conscience vote on 28 October became inevitable unless a decision could be forced by anti-conscriptionist pressure.

[1] Ibid p. 29

[2] Report W.A. federal executive delegates, State executive correspondence, file 2.

Upon the announcement of the referendum at the end of August the majority of PLP members indicated support for an affirmative vote. Scaddan's views in favor of conscription had been made clear at state conference; acting-general secretary, in McCallum's absence on sick leave, James Cornell MLC, was also known to agree. State executive indicated a willingness to await the promised further arguments from Hughes [1] but rejected requests for convening of a special federal conference from N.S.W. and Queensland parties.[2] Consequently the possibility of effecting a change in policy rested upon unofficial elements and it was characteristic that these required an initial stimulus from interstate. At the direction of the Melbourne-based Anti-Conscription TUC executive, T.J. Miller visited W.A. to rally supporters and co-ordinate their efforts with those in the east. During Miller's stay an Anti-Conscription League had been formed with Cameron as president, state AWU chief T.C. Butler as secretary and other prominent Labor members participating. Following Miller's example agitation began and approaches were made to all Labor organizations couching the appeal along lines that conscription was inimical to union interests and fostered the use of cheap colored labor. 'In principle it is an instrument of national defence; in practice it is made an instrument of working class subjugation'. [3] There was a discouraging response at first, state executive treating an appeal by Miller with diffidence [4] and declining even to disseminate the report of the Anti-Conscription TUC, [5] but by the end of September the flow of information regarding the anti-campaigns in the east and the first results of ACL activities in their own party brought about a perceptible shift from the attitude of neutrality. A motion that Cornell be accredited to the affirmative campaign committee was defeated 19-10 [6]

[1] Minutes state executive 4, 11 September, 1916

[2] Ibid 18 September 1916.

[3] ACL circular, Minutes Metropolitan District Council 21 September, 1916.

[4] Minutes state executive 7 August 1916.

[5] Ibid 21 August 1916.

[6] Ibid 18 September, 1916.

and early next month the executive balance was close enough to tie on a motion declaring that it was desirable for all Laborites to vote No.[1]

The battle continued in the district councils in an effort to have a majority agree to state executive changing the state conference stand. Midland Council had been first to declare against compulsion following an address by Tom Miller on 16 August and it later affiliated with the Anti-Conscription League, recommending that state executive join in the No campaign.[2] As the tempo of the campaign increased the councils defined their positions until the balance stood at four opposed to conscription, two in favor and a further three either neutral or desiring some form of compromise.[3] This was insufficient to permit any sort of authoritative decision to be made but did not preclude attempts to obtain a recommendation by the executive. The opportunity to swing the fine balance in favor of the antis came at the meeting on 16 October when the manifesto of the 34 FPLP opponents of Hughes was considered and a motion endorsing their position was carried 14-13; a further motion by Cameron that the executive 'advise' a No vote was defeated 14-12. Even this relatively mild decision caused Cornell to resign as acting-secretary, to be replaced by ACL member Andrew Clementson; this was accepted only with regret and a resolution carried forthwith gave all officers a free hand on the vote. Thus the

[1] Drawn 16-16 on a voice vote, then lost 17-15 with delegates standing. After a division was insisted upon it was affirmed lost by 18-16. Had the proxy of a known anti-conscription member been accepted the story hereafter might well have been different. Ibid, 2 October, 1916.

[2] This produced a reaction from some of its own members but after a campaign to sell the ACL decision a motion for recission of the affiliation was defeated by 2-1 majority. Minutes Midland Council 12, 25 October 1916.

[3] Of those councils whose views are ascertainable the breakdown went : Opposed: Midland, Eastern Goldfields, South West and Albany District Councils. In favor : Metropolitan and North Coolgardie Councils. Neutral or ambiguous : Fremantle, Eastern Agricultural and Murchison Councils.

ALF executive remained substantially divided on conscription and even though the antis exploited the decision to the full, circulating the FPLP manifesto as 'convincing proof of the antagonism conscription has aroused in the ranks of democracy', [1] there was still no official policy. J. Hilton, conscriptionist editor of the AWU-financed weekly Westralian Worker, maintained his policy of giving representation to both sides in his pages despite the protests this had aroused and defended it as essential for the preservation of ALF unity. [2] As a reflection of Labor opinion in Western Australia, this seemed perfectly justified and the state as a whole gave the largest favorable majority to the government in Australia - 94, 069 to 40, 884.

The split in Western Australia, 1916-17

Following the referendum on 28 October state executive opted for a conciliatory attitude towards the parliamentary conscriptionists, announcing

that we desire to have the breach in the ranks of the party healed and that we are opposed to the expulsion of Labor members who supported conscription, believing this to be a matter which should be left to the Laborites to decide at future selection ballots. [3]

The PLP indicated its understanding of the position by unanimously re-electing Scaddan as leader on 31 October despite his statements during the simultaneous by-election and referendum campaigns which had aroused resentment in the movement. [4] This forbearance was partly due to the moderation in Western Australian politics and partly to a marked failure to appreciate the acerbity of the issue elsewhere, on both counts due to the isolation of the state. Until completion of the transcontinental railway in 1917 the only contact between Western Australia and the east

[1] Circular to district councils, signed by Clementson. 18 October, 1916, State executive correspondence, file 27.

[2] Editorial W.W. 12 January 1917.

[3] Minutes special meeting state exeuctive 4 November 1916.

[4] Scaddan belonged to the strongly anti-conscription Eastern Goldfields Council and ignored their protests at his conduct. Minutes Eastern Goldfields District Council 30 October, 13 November 1916.

was by sea. The cable link was subject to wartime censorship and the cost of exchanging personnel was such as to inhibit the free flow of party members which alone could have permitted a close understanding of events by the ALF. McCallum had been in the east when the crisis broke and remained there until December, being ideally placed to keep his executive informed of the intensity of the struggle. Yet he wrote from Adelaide

I am very much afraid that the movement in Western Australia does not know one half of what has been going on. From my own experience with the Censor I am satisfied that you have not received nearly all the information that has been sent you.[1]

In examples given later in a speech to state executive widely circulated in pamphlet form McCallum claimed that the censor had cut out his references to Labor militancy and the epic proportions of the crisis in the east,[2] which came as a shock to the Western Australians, even Hilton registering surprise at the revelation of abuses by the conscription side during the campaign. There was a lack of undistorted information about even the nearest state and the true alignment of forces within the Labor movement[3] and other observers confirmed the serious misapprehensions which had been allowed to develop.[4]

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- [1] McCallum - Cornell 10 November, 1916. State executive correspondence file 135.
 - [2] Minutes state executive 21 January 1917 reproduced as 'Labor Impeaches the Hughes Dictatorship.'
 - [3] J.T. Lutey in a speech to the Goldfields Council, W.W. 12 January 1917.
 - [4] L. McDonald, Queensland state secretary Daily Standard 13 December, 1916; Adela Pankhurst, APA organiser and VSP member, toured W.A. early in 1917 and reported that isolation had made it a conscriptionist state and allowed Labor there to be misled up until the federal split. 'The greatest need in Western Australia is communication with the East', Socialist 20 April, 1917. McCallum was quite blunt: 'The censor is the man who is responsible for the W.A. vote'. McCallum - Cameron 14 November, 1916. Cameron Papers MS 1005/1 Conscription.

Significantly, one of the differences between the campaigns on opposite sides of the continent was summarised by McCallum in a confidential address before the Midland Council during a tour to acquaint the ALF with recent events.

The details were given of the Japanese menace to Australia which had been responsible for Mr. Hughes being called hot-footed to England, and surprised most of those present, though the speaker pointed out that such information was common knowledge in the East and was used on the public platforms. [1]

Although Western Australians had been alerted to the danger of cheap coloured labor as a consequence of conscription, and the fortuitous arrival of a boat-load of unsuspecting Maltese immigrants had been exploited as a precursor of the flood to come, the Japanese scare had not been prominent at all during the campaign in the west.

Symptomatic of the breakdown in communication between the ALF and its counterparts was the mistaken assumption that the special ALP federal conference scheduled for December was intended to prevent rather than consummate the split. Western Australia was the only party not to receive a delegation from the Victorian state executive to canvass support for the proceedings. On the day after Hughes led the walkout of supporters from the FPLP in Melbourne, the state executive officers met in Perth to consider the federal conference request and concluded that, 'Judging from the telegrams it was apparent that a special conference was regarded as the only body likely to save the federal body from being broken up.' [2] Under the pressing circumstances state executive itself grouped the W.A. delegation to include three conscriptionists (J. Cornell, MLC, Reg. Burchell, MHR and Senator P.J. 'Paddy' Lynch) and three anti-conscriptionists (McCallum, H.C. Gibson and J.T. Lutey). When Stewart indicated from Melbourne that the former component might not exactly meet the approval of the other states, since Lynch had accepted a portfolio

[1] Minutes Midland District Council 31 January 1917.

[2] Minutes state executive 15 November 1916.

in Hughes' new ministry and Burchell had also left the FPLP, state president Doland repeated his belief that conciliation was the chief objective [1] and on the day that Hughes was announcing the name of his new party Doland was still talking of a 'possible split' in the federal caucus.[2] All councils, including the anti-conscription ones, issued general instructions in favor of a reconciliation. While the delegation was en route it was decided to reopen federal preselections, four FPLP defectors having already been re-endorsed, but this signified little and was not in anticipation of federal conference decisions. Indeed a strong conscriptionist won a place on the new ticket after the split took place.[3] When federal conference excluded Lynch and Burchell, Cornell withdrew on a point of principle, and there was a spontaneous reaction of surprise and widespread indignation in the ALF.

In Melbourne a Queensland MLA put the case for full federal authority most succinctly:

If a majority of the states considered that the action of alleged Western Australian Labor men was detrimental to the interests of Labor, there was no remedy but to expel them. He believed it would be a good thing if Mr. McCallum and his colleagues on their return started anew with the Labor movement on a fresh footing.[4]

Gardiner and three Tasmanian Senators were concerned over the expulsion decision but only one joined McCallum, Gibson and Lutey in voting against it. Later it was suggested that a deputation be appointed to return with the W.A. loyalists to present the situation to the ALF but McCallum vigorously rejected this as a reflection on his party and an infringement of state sovereignty : it was finally agreed to leave it to federal executive and the ALF to decide with power for the former to send in an organiser to straighten out the branch if necessary.[5] Some threat

[1] West Australian 22, 23 November 1916.

[2] Ibid 24 November 1916.

[3] G.F. Dennis, who did not recant his views until the second conscription referendum. Minutes Metropolitan Council 13 November, 1917.

[4] Report ALP special federal conference, 1916, p. 9; also Rae ibid p. 6

[5] Ibid p. 26.

of federal intervention, though tactful and sympathetic, remained in the sending of Frank Austey and Gardiner to Perth with the returning delegation. State executive was in the dilemma of having to reconcile federal policy with its past decisions and still prevent a disastrous split, a task which it proceeded to tackle with some delicacy. Fortunately the FPLP breakaways provided little problem as most district councils were prepared to admit the justice of their treatment and after a week of careful deliberation state executive voted by 25-5

That as the state congress left the question of conscription an open one this executive cannot expel any member for either supporting or opposing conscription but, as Messrs. Pearce, Lynch, DeLargie, Henderson, Buzacott and Burchell have left the Labor party by joining another political party they have severed their connection with the Australian Labor Party.[1]

One final offer was made to accept them back if they broke immediately with Hughes but executive was spared the embarrassment of any acceptances. A circular communicating the terms of this deal 'In view of the fact that there may have been some misunderstanding so far as the attitude of the party in this state was concerned', elicited the reply drafted by Pearce declining the offer:

As the whole of the Official Labor party has handed over its freedom to the state executives ... the Western Australian members would be handing over their freedom ... to the state executives of the various states.[2]

With Pearce directing at long range, efforts were made to found a National Labor party in Western Australia in conjunction with similar attempts in South Australia and Victoria and appeals were made for support from ALF members and organisations, a fatal mistake as participation in this party by conscriptionists within the ALF gave state executive the same excuse for expelling them as had been accepted in relation to the FPLP breakaways. A special state conference was called for March to

[1] Minutes state executive 18, 21 January 1917.

[2] McCallum - Pearce 23 January 1917. Pearce papers NLA B8 213/2/11 and Pearce's reply 213/2/15-17.

include all unions and branches of whatever sympathies and business was decided by a joint committee of pro- and anti-conscriptionists with whom PLP leader Scaddan was invited to confer.[1]

The idea is that Congress should be a true reflex of the opinion of the movement and that once the decision of the majority is made known that the movement will be solidified on those decisions.[2]

Anybody remaining out after that would have only themselves to blame - 'When it comes to a choice between individuals and the movement, the individual must go'.[3] McCallum and all others who could be spared were sent out to address the organisations to obtain support and solidarity was assisted by the replacement from January of Hilton as Westralian Worker editor by John Curtin. This had been arranged by Anstey during his visit to Perth; Curtin was his protege, a VSP member and had been secretary of the Anti-Conscription TUC national executive. With his arrival the Worker pursued sound and far more informed Labor policy and even the problem of isolation was relieved with establishment of the rail link to the east. The pro-Hughes faction organised but with little conviction and less hope of success.[4]

In a foreword to the official report of the 1917 conference state executive reviewed development of the crisis in mildly self-reproving tones - 'without any lead from the quarters which should have supplied a lead, the whole movement fell a victim to disintegrating factional fights in the executive, in councils and in ALF branches'. Developments in the eastern Labor parties had left the ALF in a 'highly critical' situation after the referendum and now that the 'soul' of the rest of movement had been understood a reappraisal was in order.[5] Several temporising

[1] Minutes state executive 5, 7 February 1917.

[2] Circular to district councils 6 February 1917, State Executive correspondence, file 60.

[3] ALF manifesto drafted by A. McCallum for state executive, Minutes state executive 7 February 1917.

[4] Hilton - Pearce 2 March 1917, Pearce papers NLA 213/2/66-7.

[5] Report Special ALF Congress March 1917 pp. i-iii.

amendments were overwhelmingly defeated and the state executive attitude towards the FPLP defectors was endorsed. Trouble was encountered over a third state executive recommendation

That the people of Australia, having decided by popular referendum the question of conscription, thus removing it from the sphere of practical politics, and in view of the urgent necessity of solidarity amongst the workers in order to effectively protect their interests when dealing with future serious industrial and political problems that must inevitably arise out of the war, this congress declares that no future referendum or action arising out of this controversial question shall be permitted in the movement.

Chairman P.L. O'Loughlen explained that the executive intended that the motion 'should apply only to past campaigns and not to the future' and resisted all efforts to get conference to make an outright declaration against conscription. The motion was lost and accordingly the party still possessed no authoritative policy on the subject.[1] This same caution on major policy issues extended to the war itself in a debate over two privately submitted motions; one declaring the war justifiable and urging 'continuous and energetic effort in order to ensure a speedy victory and an honorable peace', while the other asked that Britain and her Allies should formulate their joint demands upon the Central Powers to pave the way for an early and honorable peace, an Australian Peace Alliance demand. Delegates complained that they could be put in a false position, that their loyalty had not been questioned and that either statement would be misunderstood - the motion to proceed with next business was carried on the voices.[2]

It was made abundantly clear that no penalties would be exacted from conscriptionists by the conference, that advocacy of compulsory service was not at issue in the treatment of Hughes - Pearce faction supporters.

[1] Ibid p.23.

[2] Ibid p.28.

Rather the point on which the ALF split was membership of or support for another political organisation, on which state executive could feel quite safe in asserting its authority. On the opening day, O'Loughlen declared E.E. Heitmann to have placed himself outside the movement for participation in establishing the National Federation and nomination as a candidate against a sitting pro-Tudor Labor member.[1] All others supporting Nationalist candidates were repudiated by unanimous vote of conference [2] and at the request of McCallum executive invested with the power

to declare any organisation which refuses to abide by the decision of conference a bogus organisation and to take necessary action to combat the existence of such organisation and further that the state executive be authorised to take whatever action they deem necessary regarding any member who refuses to abide by the conference decision.[3]

Closely following conference was the federal election campaign in May, for which occasion these sweeping powers had obviously been intended to apply. Nine PLP members declared during its course that they felt constrained to support non-Labor candidates [4]; eventually this number totalled 14 members, including John Scaddan. Conscription was not the issue as several who had advocated it remained in the party and some retained parliamentary endorsements.[5] In contrast to N.S.W., Queensland and Victoria where expulsions had taken place even before the referendum purely on the issue of support for conscription, or South Australia and Tasmania where conscription was used to drive out unpopular political leaders and their

[1] Ibid, pp. 2-3.

[2] Ibid, p. 24.

[3] Ibid, pp. 28-9.

[4] Letters to state secretary, State executive correspondence file 81 - Rats.

[5] Robertson, 'Conscription in Western Australia' p. 30.

supporters, the split in Western Australia took place over the extension of a federal faction fight into state politics by the attempts to organise the National Labor party there. The FPLP split was irrevocable and had been forced against the wishes of the ALF but had not Scaddan and his followers insisted on running and supporting candidates against the Labor party it is entirely possible that the movement would have accommodated them.

Recovery and the remaining war years, 1917-18

Extensive disagreement over conscription meant the enforced split in Western Australia achieved significant proportions, but, lacking the rancour associated with those in other states, it was also comparatively short lived. McCallum was detailed to devote full-time efforts to cajoling disaffiliated unions into returning [1] and although the extent of rank and file division remains vague evidence does indicate substantial early union support for the Nationalist defectors, fully justifying ALF concern. The healing process was immeasurably aided by the W.A. Labor movement remaining relatively unscathed by the social conflict experienced in some eastern states. This was admitted by McCallum in a reply to a request by J. H. Catts, FPLP secretary, early in 1918 inquiring about details of damage suffered by the industrial wing in the wake of the 1917 strikes. McCallum advised that no union had been deregistered in his state and that only about 200 unionists were affected by government discrimination, the Fremantle Lumpers having loyally complied with national union directives and struck in support of the NSW unions from August to October. Apart from the watersiders, he reported that 'there is practically no alteration of union conditions arising out of the recent strike'. [2] Indeed, greater efforts remained directed at

[1] Minutes state executive 18 June, 1917.

[2] McCallum - Catts 3 April, 1918. State executive correspondence, FPLP.

coaxing recalcitrant unionists back into the movement after the conscription split than to lending succour to casualties of the class war. [1]

The importance of class-conscious industrial grievances for encouraging support for more radical policies than would normally be adopted is suggested by the experience of the ALF during the remaining period of the war. The 1917 conscription referendum campaign saw a far more coherent and almost unanimous stand adopted against compulsory service even though, after the receipt of warnings from the eastern parties, an attempt to initiate a poll by state executive members of their respective organisations to be followed by a meeting to determine a common party attitude failed. Instead it was argued that only state conference could pronounce binding policies. [2] By this time economic conscription, the dismissal of able-bodied men by employers in an effort to force them to enlist, was beginning to raise protests after it had been blatantly adopted by the Perth Recruiting Committee in an effort to pressurise the federal government to impose conscription at once. [3] In July, 1917 the previously overwhelmingly pro-conscriptionist Metropolitan District Council initiated efforts to unite the organisations in opposition to the practice, considering it 'perhaps the most important facing the Labor movement today'. [4] A delegation was organised to protest to the State Recruiting Committee and was supported by state executive and other district councils. [5] Protests were sent off to the Prime Minister against economic conscription and the censorship system, condemned as having been 'grossly prostituted for political

[1] See the report of full-time organiser W. D. Johnson, Minutes of the Organising Committee 3 March, 1918. State executive minutes.

[2] Minutes state executive 18 June, 1917.

[3] R. F. Vincent, Vice-chairman W.A. State Recruiting Committee - Pearce 28 July, 1917. Pearce papers AWM File 419/80/2 Bundle 7, item 41.

[4] Minutes Metropolitan D.C. 10, 24 July, 1917.

[5] Minutes state executive 6 August, 1917. State executive felt constrained still however by the necessity to let only state conference formulate policies and determine attitudes for the ALF as a whole. See also though Minutes Midland D.C. 15 August, 1917; Minutes Eastern Goldfields D.C. 10 August, 1917; Minutes Fremantle D.C. 21 August 1917.

purposes'. [1] State executive simultaneously endorsed Melbourne THC protests against economic conscription and the peace proposals of the NSW state conference of the Labor Party but made no expression of opinion on further participation in the recruiting drive. [2] As the second referendum on recruiting approached, factional bitterness in the ALF had begun to heal: by August one of Pearce's supporters reported to him that the National Labor party was 'moribund' and subsequent correspondence confirmed the detumescence of this organisation. [3] Similarly an Industrial Vigilance Committee, formed to rally support for the ALF at the time of the split, [4] was never meant to be more than a publicity group assisting the established party and was little heard of again.

Even in the absence of intra-party factionalism operating to polarise attitudes, the reaction to the second conscription referendum was markedly different to that of the first. Upon its announcement state executive convened a special meeting and resolved unanimously on the motion of McCallum

That in the opinion of the state executive conscription of human life is opposed to the principles of the Labor movement, and it therefore urges all councils, branches and unions in the Federation to do all they can to prevent its adoption.

Immediate steps were undertaken to appoint committees to lead the campaign against the government's proposal. [5] On the urging of the South Fremantle branch of the ALF and the Lumpers' Union Fremantle D.C. had already reversed its neutrality of the previous year and declared uncompromising hostility to conscription of human life. [6] Responding to the state executive's example, other councils fell into line and a meeting of the Metropolitan D.C. saw the spectacle of strongly conscriptionist delegates from the previous year indulge in what amounted to a

[1] See exchanges in state executive correspondence, file 24.

[2] Minutes state executive 6 August, 1917.

[3] Hay - Pearce 17 August, 1917 Pearce papers NLA 213/2/105.

[4] W.W. 2 February, 1917.

[5] Minutes state executive 12 November, 1917.

[6] Minutes Fremantle D.C. 30 October, 1917.

mass recantation of their views. [1] Other councils also resolved to support the recommendation and to co-operate with the Anti-Conscription League to defeat the referendum. Although the weight of the ALF could not reverse the state result of October, 1916 the margin in December, 1917 was clearly reduced and the W.A. party had done something to acquit itself of its delinquent reputation.

	YES	NO
1916	94,069	40,884
1917	84,116	46,522

After national defeat of the conscription referendum the ALF was anxious to follow a policy on voluntary recruiting uniform with that of the other Labor parties. In January, 1918 the W.A. State Recruiting Committee requested Labor speakers for its platforms and was informed that recruiting was a matter of federal Labor policy and that no position could be adopted until after the ALP federal conference in Perth later that year. [2] The disposition of the ALF to support the war effort can hardly have been encouraged by the addition of the inoffensive Philip Collier, successor to Scaddan as PLP leader, to the small but growing list of victims of the War Precautions Act. Collier had been charged in the previous year with making statements prejudicial to recruiting and likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty and the case dragged on until mid-way through 1918. John Curtin, as editor of the Westralian Worker, was another victim and there were others besides. [3] Such irritations help explain the opposition by the majority of the state executive to ALF participation in the Governor-General's recruiting conference in Melbourne during May. The state executive officers accepted the invitation at very short notice and deputed Collier and McCallum as W.A. Labor representatives [4] but opposition by the full executive was vociferous. A motion was passed by 14-6 declaring that the officers should not have accepted [5] and some members wanted a statement endorsed opposing any further

[1] Minutes Metropolitan D.C. 13 November, 1917.

[2] Minutes state executive 7 January, 1918.

[3] See material in state executive correspondence, file 199 Legal Defence.

[4] Minutes state executive 8 April, 1918.

[5] Ibid. full executive meeting.

reinforcements being sent overseas at all, [1] though most district councils approved the officers' action.

On issues of defence and foreign policy at the ALP federal conference in Perth this conflict of strong opinions was most evident with W.A. delegates taking sides on the basis of eastern state attitudes. Cameron and, to a certain extent F. A. Baglin, supported the radical NSW position and W. Roche and W. D. Johnson acted as the spokesmen for J. H. Catts in pushing the compromise view and appear to have worked closely with the latter in tactical manoeuvring. The majority of the ALF was happy to concur with the policies on the war and recruiting eventually settled upon there, and conscientiously set about the task of securing assent to the recruiting declaration submitted by conference to a plebiscite of the Australian Labor parties' membership for ratification. [2] When the practical difficulties entailed in the unprecedented task became manifest executive favoured scrapping of the plebiscite and an open declaration by the federal authorities of conference policy. [3] Despite criticism from some union quarters that the movement in W.A. generally and its spokesmen specifically had 'failed to grapple with the war situation and democracy's attitude thereto', [4] the ALF nevertheless did produce a 'substantial majority' in favour of federal policy. [5] When the Armistice in November rendered the just completed plebiscite redundant (Tasmania and South Australia having failed to implement it) the Western Australian Labor party did at least have the satisfaction of ending the war years in accord with federal Labor policy.

[1] Ibid. 15 April, 1918. This was subjected to second thoughts by its sponsors and defeated 14-4.

[2] Ibid. 5 August, 2 September, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 7 October - 28 October, 4 November, 1918.

[4] A criticism directed by implication at the state PLP. Minutes Combined Propaganda Committee 14 August, 1918.

[5] W.W. 7 March, 1919; Report of state executive, 1918-19.

TASMANIAN LABOR DURING THE WAR

Tasmanian Labor was affected by the disadvantages of society in that island state - small, scattered populations, poorly organised unions, many of which persisted in cautious craft union attitudes, and the absence of a powerful trade union movement. Political Labor had established itself almost despite the apathy of unions and distrust of politicians by unionists was a characteristic feature of pre-war years since the establishment of the Tasmanian Workers' Political League upon the basis of the NSW Labor model in 1903. Such development of trade unions as did take place owed much to the assistance of mainland organisers; the two major TLCs in Hobart and Launceston were only created in 1909 and 1910 respectively and comparatively large unions, such as the AWU in 1908 and an independent Miners' union in 1910, were late arrivals on the scene also. By contrast the development of the political wing had been much more highly advanced, with a first Labor government in 1909 and again under John Earle from April, 1914 - April, 1916. [1] Upon this poorly integrated and developmentally unbalanced foundation the effects of Labor in office were to be disastrous. A committee established to investigate closer unity proposals at state conference in 1916, the culmination of efforts over a number of years by activists to reform the party, merely confirmed what had been established previously, but this was disturbing enough. Growing numbers of unionists, it was reported, increasingly regarded political activity as 'comparatively unimportant'.

There was dissatisfaction with some members of the PLP towards questions affecting the unions and there seemed to be a good deal of disappointment at the general results of the Labor government's term of office. There was evidence that this feeling was fast developing into active hostility to the Labor party and a stage had already been reached wherein proposals for running direct union nominees for Labor seats were contemplated in all seriousness. [2]

[1] Indispensable sources for this period are M. McRae, 'Some Aspects of the Origins of the Tasmanian Labour Party', THRA 3, December, 1953 pp.21-27 and 'The Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions, 1903-1923'. THRA 5, 1955, pp.4-13.

[2] Report presented by W.A. Woods MHA to TWPL special conference, 1917. Daily Post 12 January, 1917.

Simultaneously the party branches also had reached a low point in membership and activities. Reorganisation schemes were considered with glacial slowness and Hobart TLC president G. Bigwood supported a motion in favor of direct union representation in parliament by industrial candidates at the Interstate Trade Union Congress in Hobart, 15 - 18 May, because

in Tasmania the industrialists had no say in the election of parliamentary Labor candidates. Though unions could affiliate the conditions were not satisfactory to them, and men got into parliament as representatives of Labor who were not in sympathy with the industrial movement. [1]

The parallels with the situation in the N.S.W. and South Australian Labor movements are striking, yet the outcome quite different.

One clearly distinguishable difference between the Tasmanian /union wing and those in other states was the lack of strong and enterprising leadership in the former. Due to the size of the organisations there were few unions or industrial bodies which could afford full-time officials and what staff were available were submerged with mundane administrative work and had little time for political work of orthodox Labor or more radical nature. Any socialist or other left wing elements in the Tasmanian movement were indistinguishable from their more moderate fellows: at least the reaction to the war and to the buildup to the conscription crisis seems to have excited no radical agitation to speak of and consequently there was no pressure behind coherent, persistently argued policies on the war and defence. In general the mass of Tasmanian unionists seemed as uninterested in these matters prior to the crisis as they were in reorganisation schemes for the movement, on which the initiatives were deriving wholly from the political wing. Tasmanian annual conference met at Launceston in July, 1916 and delegates found themselves obliged to declare a position on compulsory overseas service. A vaguely worded motion implying the need for conscription failed to gain more than a few votes and the successful declaration was suggested by Edmund Dwyer-Gray, Irish-

[1] The motion was lost. Report of Proceedings, Interstate Trade Union Congress, 1916. pp.10; McRae, 'Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions'. pp.7-8.

Australian editor of Hobart Labor paper the Daily Post. After strongly deprecating what he termed the 'extreme resolutions' of some other Labor conferences Dwyer-Gray moved

That in the opinion of this conference the introduction of conscription is inimical to the civil and national interest of Australia, and should only be resorted to to save those interests from foreign invasion.

It further expresses its trust and confidence that the young men of Australia will, by voluntary enlistment, do all in defence of the empire that can reasonably be expected. [1]

Although a far cry from the determined resolutions of N.S.W. and Victorian parties, or the Anti-Conscription Congress in Melbourne two months previously at which no Tasmanian representatives attended, the intention of this policy must have been quite clear even to the PLP leader and ex-Premier Earle who presided over conference.

Nevertheless shortly after Hughes announced his referendum policy Earle joined Liberal Premier W.H. Lee to become deputy-chairman of the pro-conscription National Referendum Council in the company of other political opponents, prominent business and social figures and clerical and military luminaries. [2] A branch at Launceston and several other small bodies came out in support of the referendum [3], but these elements were overwhelmed by the response against conscription. Hobart TLC was represented on the State War Council, but for the pragmatic reason of being able to speak out on recruiting procedures and repatriation schemes, [4] and its immediate reaction was to appoint an Anti-Conscription Executive, send Bigwood to Melbourne for the Anti-Conscription TUC meeting there and begin

[1] Daily Post 29 July, 1916

[2] Ibid. 27 September, 1916

[3] Launceston No.1 TWPL censured state secretary Senator Guy over his opposition to Hughes. Letters and Press Comments on the Actions of the Hon. John Earle in the Great National Crisis, compiled by R.D. Lord. Hobart 1917. p.8.

[4] Daily Post 14 September, 1916.

preparations for a campaign. [1] Its opinions on the issue were very much ones concerning the cost of conscription to Australia, the envisaged breaking down of unionism, flood of cheap colored labor and strain of resources which could accompany it. Robert Cosgrove told a mass meeting of unionists after it had unanimously affirmed absolute opposition to conscription that

It was a fight for unionism, for all it had ever accomplished, for all it stood for, and they would be worse than curs if they stood idly by and let their rights be filched from them without a fight. [2]

Some minor resentment of Earle and his failings as a Labor Premier was expressed but there seemed no conscious attachment of conscription to the political leadership situation.

Strongest response came from the party leadership, the remainder of the PLP and the state executive, and owed most to the efforts of J.A. Lyons, deputy leader of the PLP and former state treasurer and state president of the TWPL. Joe Lyons genuinely regretted the war and declined to support the voluntary recruiting campaign but his views at this time are hard to fully establish, being an amalgam of idealism, half-digested socialism and reformism, which together tended to make him a radical in the Tasmanian context. [3] In state executive Lyons secured approval from all except Earle for a lengthy declaration against conscription and then gained the signatures of all but a few in the PLP in endorsement of it, presenting the result as official Labor policy at a mass meeting in the Town Hall with Frank Anstey as feature speaker. Taking its authority from the state conference resolution the executive condemned conscription as destructive

[1] Ibid. 25 September, 1916.

[2] Ibid. 2 October, 1916.

[3] P.R. Hart, J.A. Lyons: A Political Biography, Ph.D. ANU 1967, 'J.A. Lyons, Tasmanian Labour Leader' L.H. 9 November, 1965. pp.34-42; Dame Enid Lyons, So We Take Comfort London, 1965.

of national interests and civil liberties and conducive to business and industrial disorganisation and the ruin of primary industry, without the prospect of decisively affecting the war. Going beyond this however it was further claimed

that if threats of compulsion were removed and the voluntary system were placed on a sound basis, and the whole financial resources of the Commonwealth utilised to ease the burden of the people, the young men of Australia would, by voluntary service, do all that is required ... to the point when further depletion of the fit manhood of the nation might become a peril to the Commonwealth itself. [1]

The following campaign was not everything that the Labor organisers considered necessary [2] and Tasmania became one of the three states to give a majority in favor of conscription: 48,493 - 32,833.

Tasmanian Labor had not specified penalties for support of conscription and in fact it was not denied that ^{the} PLP secretary had presented as official policy the attitude that all members were permitted a free vote on the issue, [3] but, when only two PLP members adopted the pro-conscription stand, Lyons and his supporters could not resist the opportunity. Parliament was still in session and so, four days after the referendum a spill was called in caucus 'in view of the strained relations existing in the party'. [4] The coup met with surprised reactions in parliament and press and appears not to have been unanimously supported: Earle and Howroyd, the victims, were replaced at a resumed caucus meeting next day only 'after a

[1] Daily Post 7 October, 1916.

[2] Matt O'Brien, secretary, TLC Anti-Conscription Executive Mercury 26 October, 1916.

[3] C.R. Howroyd Mercury 3 November, 1916.

[4] Ibid. 2 November, 1916.

long and somewhat acrimonious discussion' was reported. Lyons and Ben Watkins won election to the vacant places and the resignations of their predecessors were formally received by state conference. The despatch with which the numbers had been utilised evidently rankled with some party members but it is quite clear that this act by Lyons, rather than pressure from the rank and file or from interstate, caused the split in Tasmania. President of the Launceston No.1 branch resigned over the state executives' conscription policy and the treatment of Earle and a number of branches disbanded or were dissolved by state conference in 1917 in the post-referendum recovery [1], a fairly light injury compared to the whole-sale defections in NSW, South Australia and Western Australia. Tasmanian unions called for the deposal of Hughes as FPLP leader only on 11 November, so it remains unclear how much the PLP developments encouraged the two Tasmanian MsHR, Jens Jensen and W.H. Smith, to defect with the Prime Minister on 14 November. One further casualty of the conscription split occurred with Senator R.H. Ready of Tasmania succumbing to the inducements of Hughes to resign while two other Tasmanians, Senators Gray and Long, were also encouraged to absent themselves from the federal parliament and so destroy the Labor Senate majority in the complex early months of 1917.

It has been maintained that the conscription crisis had the paradoxical effect of galvanising the ailing Tasmanian Labor movement back to life, not only by giving Lyons his chance at the PLP leadership but in benefiting the unions as well. [2] Affiliation with the Melbourne TUC national executive and the visit of leading Victorian party members D.J. Russell and P. Loughnan were the immediate causes of the first state-wide conference of Tasmanian unions, giving them the first experience of concerted action on shared political goals. The conscription crisis was cited as having a readily apparent effect in encouraging acceptance of the new constitutional framework presented

[1] Letters and Press Comments pp.15-16.

[2] Editorial Daily Post 12 January, 1917; 'McRae 'The Tasmanian Labor Party and Trade Unions'. pp.10-11.

at a special state conference in January, 1917. Chief figure behind the scheme, W.A. Woods, drew the moral that both political and industrial wings worked more advantageously in concert than when opposed, [1] but the dogged insistence by a member of the consulting TLC delegation that 'the movement for closer unity came from the political side' remained valid. [2] If the party structure was to be changed for the benefit of the unions without their own initiative being involved, it augured poorly for their effect on policy. Successful use of union strength depended upon commonality of aims and the ability to agree over specific tactics, the very characteristics most wanting in the Tasmanian movement. Certainly little of them were evident at the conference during for example, the debate concerning continuing support for compulsory military training or the abolition of compulsory Defence Act provisions altogether, initiated by FPLP delegates. Although most of the leading unionists seemed disposed towards the latter alternative it was defeated 22 - 20 and Watkins guided debate to the eventual compromise declaring Tasmanian support for compulsory military training on the fulfilment of certain conditions regarding wealth tax and upon use of such troops in Australia. Later, conference resolved in favor of the declaration of peace terms by the Powers and a negotiated peace, but when it came to the attitude on continuation in the war it was Bigwood of the TLC himself who secured unanimous approval for the renewed voluntary recruiting scheme for the AIF. [3]

The implications for the Tasmanian party of its new structure based upon the Western Australian model were soon to be tested at the inaugural conference of the renamed Tasmanian Labor Federation, 7 - 9 April 1917. Here the representation favored the unions to a greater extent than before, comprising some 40% of the total. R. Cosgrove of the Carters and Drivers submitted a motion which seems to have drawn upon current Peace Alliance and radical thinking on the mainland and called for the state executive to seek the support of Labor in other states to bring about an international workers' peace

[1] Daily Post 12 January, 1917.

[2] Ibid. 13 January, 1917.

[3] Ibid.

conference on the initiative of the Australian movement. Although Shoobridge and Woods, MSHA, supported this it was easily disposed of by an amendment affixing the words 'after the war'. The TLF experiment did not survive the end of the year amidst electoral defeat, financial adversity and plain inefficiency; the unions were the first to seek their freedom to return to the old political/industrial division against the inclinations of state executive, [1] and the Tasmanian movement reverted to the old organisation in May, 1918. In the interim executive had conformed with other states by endorsing the NSW 1917 peace plank [2] and in the second conscription referendum joined with the PLP on 19 November in an Anti-Conscription Executive under Lyons again. This time the Hobart TLC had no formal participation, being in process of reconstruction after the TLC experiment and in fact/^{was} requested to suspend this activity temporarily to avoid emphasis upon Labor organisational problems during the campaign. [3] On 20 December the state returned a bare majority for conscription in a marked change from 1916.

	Yes	No
1916	48,493	37,833
1917	38,881	38,502

During the final year of the war few changes were effected in attitudes to the war and defence. Lyons attended as Labor executive and PLP delegate at the Governor-General's recruiting conference and, remaining unenthusiastic about the war, reported diffidently to state conference that he could see no reason not to support the voluntary system and that ^{the} concessions obtained had made it a useful exercise.[4] Dwyer-Gray, withdrawing from the Recruiting Committee during the last referendum, resumed his assistance and his appeal to state conference

[1] State executive minutes 15 October, 19 November, 1917; 5 February, 1918.

[2] Ibid. 15 August, 1917.

[3] Ibid. 19 November, 1917.

[4] Daily Post 9 May, 1918.

for support of the new appeal was greeted with acclamation. [1]
Delegates also agreed that Labor policy towards participation in
future wars should be defined to restrict the discretion of a Prime
Minister, resolving

That no action be taken by Australia in any future wars
without the approval of the electors as expressed by
means of a referendum, unless Australia be directly
attacked. [2]

Except for the final phrase, added to the original motion by Enid
Lyons, the decision closely approximated part of the actual defence
policy adopted at Perth. Conference further determined to continue
support for compulsory military training for home defence in the
face of strong opposition to maintenance of the old system, one unionist
referring to it as 'the one blot on the escutcheon of the Australian
Labor party'. As a concession to this feeling it was determined to
increase the age at which training began, to make Labor defence policy
'Citizen Defence Force with compulsory military training and voluntary
enlistment for active service and that the Defence Act be amended to
raise the age of training to 18 years'. [3] Because of financial strin-
gency only Senators Long and O'Keefe with W.E. Shoobridge MLA
represented Tasmania at Perth but the services of Curtin and McCallum
were obtained to bear proxies. On the major issue over the NSW
proposal on continued support of the war effort, all pursued the moderate
line and it was due to the objections by Tasmania and the other two
small states that the final compromise to resort to a rank and file
plebiscite was devised.

Tasmania is an interesting comparison case for Labor history
in this period, possessing many of the classic conditions for conflict,
with an under-represented, dissatisfied union movement facing a

[1] Ibid. 10 May, 1918

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. 11 May, 1918.

dominant PLP in government for several years. However the division within the Labor movement was an unequal one caused by historic and socio-economic reasons effectively confining the unions to the status of small, unfinancial bodies dominated by parochial concerns - suspicious of politicians but confining action to vague talk of running independent candidates and sending deputations to ministers. There was no coherent ideology to act as a unifying factor although the common danger of conscription forced unity and seemed to suggest the value of a closer relationship. Once the TLF experiment was abandoned, though, in favor of the old system of organisation, even the emergence of a large single union after the Miners' merger with the AWU failed to secure a determining union voice. The Tasmanian branch of the ALP remained very much a parliamentarian-dominated party.

THE RISE OF THE INDUSTRIALISTS

N.S.W., 1915-16

The parliamentary representative of the workers tends to set himself up as a leader and to claim the right to neglect the recommendations of Conference, and even the sacred platform itself in accordance with his interpretation of the interests of the Party ... This is plainly contrary to the Labour theory of self-government, and has to be checked by the exercise of the authority of the governing organs of the Party.

V. Gordon Childe,
How Labour Governs, p.31

Two crises were destined to break upon the N.S.W. Labor party (then entitled the Political Labor League or PLL) in 1916 - the issue of control over the party itself and that of conscription for overseas service. In the largest state with the strongest working class movement the Labor party had been in office since 1910 and was led from 1913 by the brilliant W.A. Holman, whose dominance over the PLP was extended to the state executive and, when necessary, the state conference of the party. Since inauguration of the Labor governments there had been a steady resentment building up against the politicians over their failure to enact legislation in the interests of the working class who put them in office and pursue the implementation of the Labor platform. Grievances ranged from demands for preference to unionists, arbitration act amendments, workmen's compensation, a minimum wage and other matters all exacerbated since 1914 by inadequate protection from the erosion of real wages by inflation, which had proved worse over the aggregate of the last three years than in any other state and had always been below the Commonwealth average since 1901. [1] In his defence Holman could and did cite war time stringency, the obstruction of the N.S.W. Upper House and the difficulties of 'packing' that chamber and other arguments, but all failed to placate the critics within his own parliamentary party and in the Labor movement at large. [2]

[1] C.Y.B. 14, 1901-1920. Variation in Effective Wages p. 1006.

[2] H.V. Evatt, Australian Labour Leader. Sydney, 1940.

The Premier's attitude towards his party had become increasingly arrogant and at state conference - 'the annual escape pipe of the movement through which waste steam goes off' [1] - in July, 1915 he survived an attack upon him over a number of issues led principally by the Australian Workers' Union after having skilfully isolated it in anticipation of the attempt. [2] A year later however his tactical adroitness at such manoeuvres would not only have been emulated but improved upon by his opponents.

Holman's principal opposition stemmed from the several N.S.W. branches of the AWU, the largest Australian union with branches in every state and much latent power. This union's advantages lay in the size conferred upon it by a series of pre-war amalgamations and the claim based upon that for representation upon state Labor conferences and executives. A well organized bureaucracy of paid officials at the apex of this oligarchic organisation formed a base for political as well as solely industrial activities and included some very tough operators. AWU policy at national level was formulated at annual congress in Sydney of all the branch leaderships and consisted of a curious mixture of the radical and moderate - for example it took the first opportunity to condemn 'warfare which is against the workers' interests' and express hopes for 'the overthrow of capitalism and militarism and the triumph of working class movements throughout the world', [3] but when Western Branch delegates J. Cullinan and C. Last moved the withdrawal of AWU financial support from the N.S.W. Labor party due to its poor performance in office this was rejected by 14-9 by those affirming that the appropriate strategy was to work within the party. [4] In fact the AWU was far from revolutionary, being an example par excellence of an entrenched union machine. Veteran founder and General-President, Senator W.G. Spence, was overwhelmingly re-elected the next year against a more lively Queensland contender admitting to IWW ties, but on certain matters the AWU as the embodiment of the Australian rural ethos exhibited something of the radical-nationalism by then beginning to fade.

[1] Evatt quoting Holman in 1914. ibid p. 339

[2] V. Molesworth, The Industrial Section of the A.L.P. Molesworth papers MS 71/2; A.W. 8, 15, 22 April 1915.

[3] Ibid pp. 28-30.

[4] Official Report AWU Convention 28 January 1916 pp. 11-12.

Solely on industrial issues alone there were grounds for complaints, General-Secretary Ted Grayndler having to lobby the FPLP, assisted by Senators Spence and Barnes, to obtain necessary amendments to industrial legislation to regularise its standing after direct approaches to the Hughes cabinet were stalled. [1] By this time the initiative was being taken by Central Branch, AWU leaders Jack Bailey and W.H. Lambert, the President and Secretary respectively, who were strongly hostile to Holman, [2] and began to develop links with Sydney unions by the end of 1915. Early in new year the Branch resolved unanimously to transfer its headquarters from Orange to rooms at PLL Head Office, Macdonnell House, in Pitt Street, Sydney. [3] Urged on vociferously by AWU national weekly the Australian Worker, the branch proposed at 1916 National Convention that the union campaign to capture Labor Senate preselections but this was turned down, though even Grayndler acknowledged that action in N.S.W. was imperative. [4] Rejection of another motion for disaffiliation from the N.S.W. party by the AWU in that state left only one option remaining, to capture the party from inside to compel implementation of Labor policies.

There was no lack of left-wing critiques of the war, the Labor governments and the existing order in N.S.W. by the Australian Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, Industrial Workers of the World and others. The last-named was to become political bete noire of conservatives in all parties and was even then greatly exaggerated in its direct influence, proclaiming more by its existence than actual accomplishments. [5]

[1] Ibid pp. 3-4.

[2] Report Central Branch Executive 6-9 October, A.W. 28 October, 1918.

[3] Report, half-yearly meeting Central Branch ibid 13 January, 1916.

[4] Official Report AWU Convention 1916, pp. 67-70.

[5] V.G. Childe, How Labor Governs, pp. 145-150 and P.J. Rushton The Industrial Workers of the World in Sydney 1913-1917, M.A. University of Sydney, 1969.

There was a considerable ferment of radical ideologies feeding on growing dissatisfactions, including the growing importance of conscription. Opposition to compulsory overseas service developed under the stimulus of Universal Service League agitation which Holman supported. A number of socialist activists founded an Anti-Conscription League in conjunction with militant leaders of the Ironworkers, United Laborers and other unions [1] to carry out propaganda in the Labor movement. Within a month it had already moved to the extreme conclusion

that the only way for the workers of N.S.W. to prevent conscription from being passed, or enforced, is for all organised workers of Australia to strike against same. [2]

It was to be some time though before the socialists' broad analyses began to attract consideration on a wider level; meanwhile there was an instinctive reaction against the prospect of conscription from all major Labor organisations.

When the Sydney Labor Council first considered conscription in September, 1915 it turned down its own Executives' recommendation, merely observing that no reason for it was yet apparent and demanded instead that wealth be conscripted before human life.[3] Council represented metropolitan unionism and dominated the rest of organised Labor throughout the state; although discontented with Holman's record also it was still politically cautious and rejected the idea of separate industrial parliamentary representation.[4] Later the AWU went even further carrying with minimum of debate a resolution specifically aimed at influencing the rest of the Labor movement:

That this Convention absolutely opposes the principle of conscription as being opposed to the spirit of our time and race; and more especially is this so in Australia, which has contributed more men under the voluntary system in proportion to its population than any other portion of the British Empire.[5]

[1] ACL Minutes 23 September, 1915.

[2] Records of votes were unusual : this resolution was carried 22-6, Ibid 27 October, 1915.

[3] Minutes Labor Council Executive 28 September; General Meeting 30 September, 1915.

[4] Ibid, 6, 14 October, 1915.

[5] Official Report AWU Convention, 1916, p.10.

This attitude was seen as being in no conflict with the justifiable pride in the enlistment nationally of over 20,000 AWU members in the AIF. [1] Indeed the Central Branch had already endorsed the program publicised by the newly established N.S.W. section of the Australian Peace Alliance in favour of negotiation of a democratic settlement.[2] By late 1915 this attitude had spread to the highest party levels and state executive, subjected to 'sheaves of correspondence' from all over the state, passed by two to one majority a resolution at the end of two nights debate warning that Labor support for the Universal Service League was inadvisable - a direct rebuff to Holman and several of his ministers who favored the USL aims.[3] Hughes himself was apprehensive of the build up of pressures in his state party and its potential implications for the FPLP, advising attendance by N.S.W. federal caucus members at state executive meetings to counter 'sinister and ill-advised attacks'.[4] Nevertheless, conscription remained a side issue during the actual organising of an insurrection against the political leadership by formation of a faction within the party known as the industrial section.

As delegates to the 1916 Labor conference were elected by their respective organisations they were circularised by a group inviting their attendance at a meeting to secure 'a greater interest on the part of trade unions in the political machine and by closer co-operation at such meetings as the coming conference and elsewhere secure the fruits of active affiliation with such bodies'.[5] The first meeting took place on 6 March conducted by prominent AWU men Bailey, Cullinan and Lambert with

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- [1] Ibid General Secretary's report p.p. 3-4
 - [2] A.W. 23 December, 1915; Report half-yearly meeting Central Branch AWU 3 January, 1916 ibid 13 January, 1916.
 - [3] Endorsed 15 October and publicised 3 December, 1915. Report of N.S.W. state executive, 1916, p.4.
 - [4] W. Webster, MHR - J.H. Catts MHR, 20 January 1916. Catts papers 658/1/5(18)
 - [5] Circular from Affiliated Political Unions Committee contained in Full Story and Documents with a History of the Industrial Section of the ALP, including annual reports and balance sheets by Vol. Molesworth. Molesworth papers M.L. Uncat MSS 71/2.

A.C. Willis of the Aust. Coal and Shale Employees' Federation, also lodged at Macdonnell House, and other supporters. A pro-tem executive was elected, Phil. Adler of the Blacksmiths becoming president and organisation intensified. Formation of the group coincided with similar stirrings at Trades Hall which had been ineffective in the Labor Council and both sections combined and began regular meetings, broadening its membership to include bona fide Labor party branches as well.[1] Holman recognised the threat, published a pamphlet defending his government's record and, keeping informed by confidential reports by industrial section secretary L. Hermann, attempted to counter-organise.[2] The industrialists' attack on Holman was designed to center upon a censure motion at conference over failure to deal with the obstructionist Legislative Council blamed by the Premier for inaction on many matters. It was further decided to support introduction of the card vote to ensure that union representation at future conferences corresponded to actual size and to back a ticket for the new state executive. Successful candidates would be required to lodge signed, undated letters of resignation with an industrialist officer and would be obliged to surrender membership of the section so as to maintain a distinction between the war council of unions and branches and the controlling body of the party. A solid industrialist vote on the floor of conference was to be ensured by voting in 'threes' - section members to submit their completed ballot for verification by two others before handing it in.

[1] See statements by Phil. Adler A.W. 23 November, 1916 and Jack Bailey ibid 30 November, 1916. Also Molesworth op.cit. and his The Story of the N.S.W. Labor Party, 1891-1917 Molesworth papers 243/5/15; J. Bailey Information for Political and Industrial Students in Connection with the 1917 No-Conscription Campaign, 8 pp. M.S. Mitchell Library A 2425.

[2] Childe, How Labour Governs pp. 61-4.

When conference opened on 22 April the section had 84 delegates on side, less than the two-thirds necessary to impose major changes on the party in divisions over its motions to prohibit or severely limit the proportion of parliamentarians on state executive [1] and to adopt the card vote.[2] On the crucial issue concerning the Premier however many other delegates enthusiastically followed and the censure motion was carried after an excited debate 105-68, but it was by no means desired to supplant the ministry, only force a more zealous implementation of the Labor platform and in this lay Holman's strength. In a boldly pursued series of manoeuvres the Premier resigned as PLP leader and was replaced by a stunned caucus with John Storey. While the implications of this were being explored negotiations were opened between Holman's cabinet colleague Arthur Griffith and the industrialists, resulting in a compromise being effected. Holman undertook to conduct a referendum on abolition of the Legislative Council at the approaching state election in return for confirmation as leader by conference, support from it and the new executive against refractory elements in the PLP and a quelling of party criticism of his government. Confounded by their success the conference accepted this deal, [3] and conference was concluded with a voice-weary Holman outlining his new program and its acceptance without close scrutiny.[4]

Amidst this excitement the issue of conscription was raised only towards the end of conference on 8 May with the results of the Victorian party conference at Easter already available. Introducer of the industrialist motion was Arthur Rae who presented in place of 14 agenda items what he termed a composite proposal taking account of the Victorian decision.

[1] A.W. 27 April, 1916

[2] Ibid 18 May, 1916

[3] To the disgust of a hard core or intractables led ironically enough by Worker manager Hector Lamond who lost his position later for supporting conscription. A.W. 11 May, 1916.

[4] Holman's speech ibid and 18 May, 1916. Also the reports in the Daily Telegraph, Evatt op. cit. pp. 383-8, Bailey op. cit.; J.P. Osbourne Nine Crowded Years Sydney 1921 pp. 105-6 and Official History of the Reconstruction of the Labour Party 1916 incorporated with state executive Report 31 December, 1916.

Rae took pains to establish that he was 'heart and soul' with Great Britain, having two sons in the AIF and prevented by age and physique from himself enlisting. Compulsory service, he maintained, was a menace to unionism as an invitation to martial rule and the erosion of hard-won living standards and civil rights. Newly elected state president, the industrialist nominee J.W. Doyle, over-ruled an objection by dissidents and was upheld on challenge by 74-35. When moderates began to walk out, threatening the quorum, debate was hastily concluded and the motion carried on the voices. Principal clause of the resolution, unchallenged by Holman in remaining days, declared

That this conference solemnly pledges itself to oppose by all lawful means conscription of human life for military service abroad and directs all leagues and affiliated unions to take immediate steps to oppose all Labor members who vote for and otherwise support conscription, so as to make this a clear-cut issue between the forces of democracy and despotism : where unions or leagues fail to take such action the central executive is hereby instructed to refuse under any circumstances to endorse conscriptionist candidates.

The industrialist bloc proved decisive in the executive elections in which they swept nearly all positions, with the notable exception of Holman himself and one vice-presidency : the last position was lost after the industrialist candidate incorrectly nominated. [1] One of the problems encountered by the section in drawing up the ticket was the lack of a suitable nominee for party president. Only one PLP member had offered support before conference, R.J. Stuart-Robinson, a persistent enemy of Holman in caucus, [2] and in their search for a sound but reasonably well-known figure the industrialists selected J.W. Doyle, an undistinguished affable character whose chief recommendation was that as secretary of the Eight Hours Demonstration Committee and organiser of its art union for many years he was a familiar throughout the party. In what had been expected would be a close contest Doyle beat the Holman candidate E. Farrar by 100-69 [3] : in future the industrialists would lose their

[1] A.W. 4 May, 1916

[2] PLP Minutes 1, 3, 5 December, 1915

[3] Lamond picked up 14 votes. A.W. 4 May, 1916

diffidence about gaining party office. A number of leading figures had however decided to transfer their activities into the executive; these including Adler, Bailey, Lambert, Willis, McPherson, McKell and others, and hereafter both executive and the section were to co-operate on major issues though administrative duties remained with the former. On a final note conference concluded with Willis moving conjointly with a state minister and Universal Service League sympathiser, J.D. Fitzgerald, a declaration of assistance for the Allies in securing victory over militarism by the voluntary method [1] - an expression of forced unity to be rudely shattered before the year was out.

Conscription and the N.S.W. split, 1916

Almost immediately the advantages gained by the industrialists were registered when state executive issued a threat of expulsion to any member associating with conscriptionist bodies and began official participation in the anti-conscription meetings now being organised at the Domain.[2] By this time Sydney Labor Council had also aligned itself with active opposition by delegating speakers to the same meetings and obtaining representation on the socialist supported Anti-Conscription League.[3] Other attempts to consolidate union power were less successful, specifically the efforts of a committee established by the section to act with state executive in supervising fulfilment of Holman's promises by legislative action. Some detailed measures were worked out but the PLP refused to be dictated to and refused admittance to caucus of an industrialist deputation on the grounds that the section had no official standing.[4] Having now constituted itself as a permanent organisation with a full-time executive, regular meetings, a printed platform and a set of rules, the role of the Industrial Section within the Labor movement became one of a passive watchdog. Only at annual conferences did the

[1] A.W. 25 May 1916

[2] Ibid, 22 June 1916

[3] Ibid 15, 22 June 1916

[4] Simon Hickey, PLP secretary - J.M. Power, Industrial Section secretary 6 September, 1916. Molesworth, Full Story and Documents op. cit.

Section attain its full authority as the voice of the most active and committed rank and file, trading on the almost institutionalised suspicion of the parliamentary leaders in N.S.W., and before its anomalous existence was terminated in 1919 it was to remain a powerful piece in the Labor organisation.

Certainly it was not the dominant factor in the conscription campaign, acting essentially as a reinforcing element. When Hughes returned to Australia he was feted in Sydney by Holman and the establishment at a banquet. Later in August the Prime Minister forced through the conscription referendum plan and made representations to the Labor movement seeking support or at least a neutral attitude. Accompanying him to Sydney with news of his rebuff by both the Victorian state executive and Melbourne THC were several anti-conscription opponents. On 4 September Hughes spoke at Macdonnell House to the N.S.W. executive, stressing the threat to white Australia, but after the Industrial Section views had become known he was defeated by 21-5 and threatened with expulsion if he persisted with the plan. [1] Executive issued a request to other parties that a special federal conference be convened to decide the issue. Hughes met the Labor Council executive on the same day and bullied it into convening a special call of Council, held three days later, when Hughes put his case and supporters moved that conscription be left an open question for the referendum. Council rejected this and endorsed the attitude of state executive by 116-60, rejecting a further amendment by socialist Ernie Judd. [2] The desultory liaison with Melbourne unions, excused earlier by lack of funds, began in earnest and a local section of the Anti-Conscription Trade Union Congress contacted the Industrial Section for support and petitioned state executive for expulsion of Hughes. [3]

[1] Official History of the Reconstruction of the Labor Party, 1916 p. 5; J.T. Lang, I Remember, Sydney, 1956, pp. 65-6; W.A. Holman N.S.W. PD Second Series 66, 7 November, 1916 pp. 2452-3.

[2] Minutes special meeting executive committee Sydney Labor Council 4 September, 1916; Minutes special meeting Labor Council 7 September, 1916.

[3] J. Burns, Anti-Conscription Congress secretary - J. Power 6 September 1916. Letters re the formation of the Anti-Conscription League Molesworth papers 243/3/L, 24.

However, state executive took organisation in hand by inviting five delegates each from the major Labor bodies - the Anti-Conscription Congress based at Trades Hall, Sydney Labor Council itself, the Anti-Conscription League and the Industrial Section - to a meeting on 8 September, where Burns was elected secretary and it was resolved to circularise all Labor politicians 'asking them to do all in their power to prevent the taking of a referendum on the question of conscription of human life for military or industrial service'. It was argued that war-time conditions prejudiced a fair public airing of both sides of the question.[1] Adopting the title No-Conscription Council it was intended that this lead the fight in N.S.W. and include representation from Labor and bona-fide anti-conscription organisations elsewhere.[2] Later it became embroiled in further wrangling for control over the campaign between itself and another state executive committee controlling the substantial party facilities at Head Office in Macdonnell House, only resolved by formation of a combined campaign headquarters committee under Director and general organiser James Howard Catts, M.H.R. [3]

Labor Council members approved the one day stoppage on 4 October in protest against the call up by Hughes of trainees [4] but preferred to await the results of the referendum before considering more extensive industrial action as urged by the radicals Judd and Power [5] on behalf of the Anti-Conscription League.[6] This attitude conformed with that taken by the AWU general executive meeting in Melbourne on 25 September.[7]

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- [1] Circular to Parliamentarians n.d. ibid
 - [2] Minutes NCC 8, 12 September, 1916.
 - [3] Cf. Minutes of the Campaign Headquarters 4 October-1 November, 1916; Minutes of the No-Conscription Council 8 September-21 November, 1916 and Minutes of Anti-Conscription League 21 October-11 November, 1916 - all copied by Molesworth ibid
 - [4] Minutes Sydney Labor Council 21, 28 September, 1916
 - [5] Ibid special meeting 24 October, 1916.
 - [6] Minutes ACL 15, 23 August, 1916
 - [7] Daily Post 26 September, 1916

When Hughes went ahead with the Military Service Referendum Bill state executive took the fateful step of expelling him together with another FPLP supporter. Endorsements of Holman and three PLP colleagues were withdrawn, the distinction between these two tactics being in practice a fine one.[1] Letters were sent out requiring all other parliamentarians to indicate their attitudes : all cabinet members excepting John Estell supported Holman and, responding to their leaders' pressure, so too did half of the PLP. Executive went ahead inexorably with the purge of conscriptionists, despite entreaties by a PLP delegation of loyalists on 13 October who argued that this was too harsh and in favour of sparing moderate conscriptionist ministers such as McGowen and Hoyle.[2] After a two hour meeting the state secretary Evans emerged with a laconic summary: 'Today's deliberations came to a dead end. The executive will not compromise'.[3] Within a week of the referendum some 18 parliamentarians had been dealt with and three places on the executive declared vacant - those of Holman, Hermann and J.C. Watson. N.S.W. recorded the largest majority against compulsory military service of all the states, 474, 544 to 356, 805.

In the PLP the remaining members elected Durack to the leadership and their censure of Holman in the House was adjourned while the latter forged a coalition with the Liberals; only then was he expelled by caucus and state executive. Holman's support for conscription had been adamant and merely added to the long list of instances in which he had differed with the Labor movement. T.C. Carey from Melbourne addressed state executive on the Victorian party's decisions to proceed against the conscriptionists without compromise and N.S.W. agreed to the holding of a special federal conference.[4] The Labor Council and unaffiliated unions

[1] A.W. 21 September 1916; Molesworth, The Story of the N.S.W. Labor Party pp. 216-17.

[2] The delegation comprised John Storey, Simon Hickey, Jabez Wright and J.P. Osbourne. Osbourne, Nine Crowded Years pp. 125-6; E. Judd, The War and the Sydney Labor Council.

[3] Register 14 October, 1916.

[4] Daily Standard 11 November, 1916.

endorsed the Anti-Conscription National Executive policy of no conciliation at federal or state level also.[1] N.S.W. delegates at the A.L.P. special federal conference in Melbourne included chief industrialists Adler and Bailey, although both Senator Gardiner and Arthur Rae inclined to forbearance towards the split Western Australian party delegation and Gardiner joined the three Western Australians who voted against exclusion of Senator Lynch and R.J. Burchell, M.H.R. [2]

The N.S.W. Labor split marked the confluence of two separate issues - the conscription crisis and antagonism towards the parliamentarians who had wielded control of the party. As a result of the latter, machinery was formed within the party to facilitate the assertion of rank and file control and when conscription arose was ready to hand to enforce state conference decision. This machinery was intended to be permanent and so even after the purge it remained intact, an essentially irresponsible organisation available as a lever to be used by radicals for the alteration of policy towards the war and Australian participation in it. For this reason N.S.W. more than any other state was responsible for continuing the challenge to FPLP policy-making dominance in the aftermath of the conscription crisis: during the remaining half of the war ALP policy derived almost wholly from the clash between federal and N.S.W. state parties.

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- [1] Industrial conference Minutes Sydney Labor Council 14 November, 1916; the Council itself was prepared to make allowance for its own members who had advocated conscription. Special meeting, ibid 25 November, general meeting 7 December, 1916.
- [2] Report ALP special federal conference 1916 p.p. 5-16.

CHAPTER THREE

FEAR AND DREAD: The ALP and participation in the war, 1917 - 18

The FPLP and the war, 1917 - 18

Whatever else it accomplished the federal ALP conference in December, 1916 did not provide the party with an authoritative policy on the war and defence in general, confining itself to obiter dicta upon diversely related topics but not the broader issues. This lack was not remedied until the 1918 federal conference where, for the first time, the central points on participation in the war and Australian interests were tackled directly. In the interim party policy remained based upon the attitude in August, 1914 and such changes as occurred must be deduced from reactions to domestic events. Following upon the conscription split and reconstruction of the FPLP the two federal sides had their first opportunity to try out their paces at the elections in May, 1917. These proved disastrous to Labor, the Nationalist coalition winning 53 seats to the former's 22 and sweeping all 18 Senate vacancies as well. [1] Such a result did little to establish the new federal leadership in the eyes of the Labor parties: Frank Tudor was by no means a strong figure in personality or capacity and owed election to the leadership of the FPLP to his impeccable anti-conscription credentials and the absence of any rival figures with comparable attainments such as his. [2] Under the signatures of Tudor and FPLP secretary David Watkins the ALP manifesto released in Melbourne on 20 March proclaimed continuity of commitment.

The war is still the most pressing and insistent question confronting us. Our attitude as a party is identical with our attitude at the last election ... If again entrusted with the control of Australia's share in the war we will continue under the voluntary system to secure the services of every man fit and willing to proceed to the front.

However the first official, considered expression of doubts concerning Hughes' all or nothing approach can be detected:

[1] G. Sawyer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929. Melbourne, 1956. pp.157-8.

[2] N. Makin, Federal Labour Leaders Sydney 1961. p.70

In doing this we shall not neglect the vital necessities of Australian home defence, including the extension of our ship building industry: and we shall assist Great Britain and her Allies by stimulating the production of food supplies and metals so essential to maintain an army in the field.

Recognition of the 1916 federal conference decisions was provided in other sections stressing the retention of Australian self-government and willingness to participate at the Imperial Conference provided that the Australian government be permitted to ratify any decisions there affecting it. [1]

A hint concerning the slightly cooler tone towards participation was contained in one particular allusion to a theme established during the conscription debates:

Recent developments in aerial and submarine warfare indicate the perils which would threaten this continent if a potential enemy were permitted to acquire or resume sovereignty of the islands adjacent to Australia. In enemy control the islands would furnish numerous bases of operation for incessant raids on our coasts. [2]

This oblique reference to Australia's position in the Pacific was supplemented in a remark by the cautious Tudor on the subject of tariff protection given during the actual policy speech at Richmond at the end of the month. 'Germany is driven out of the market place pro tem, and another progressive nation has taken its place'. [3] Such statements, though, received far less prominence than their importance in the actual decision-making on compulsory service the previous year merited and provided the only real attempt to air at the highest public level the matters of substance determining Australian policy obscured at that time by claims of secrecy and national

[1] Daily Post 28 March, 1917.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Labor Call 5 April, 1917.

interest. Tudor's no doubt prudent failure to place them on the agenda of open discussion ensured that anti-Japanese suspicions were confined, with anti-war feeling, to covert debate within certain sections of the party, to culminate in powerful form by mid-1918.

Federal PLP authority in defence and foreign policy fields was tenuous and almost wholly defensive during this period, responding to pressures from below - in the caucus itself and from the state parties. Within the FPLP Tudor's role as an initiator came to be almost totally eclipsed by the party's new secretary, J.H. Catts, [1] whose position and ex-officio membership of all caucus committees, including the Defence, Naval and Military Committee, now matched more closely the scope of his ambitions. Catts' priorities in framing defence policy were in order, the threat of Japan, the running down of Australian industry and the welfare of soldiers, their dependants and returned servicemen. [2] His ideas on the third aspect were urged upon caucus and adopted after redrafting by the Defence Committee [3] and became Labor policy in the parliament. [4] Although the party had stuck by the 1917 election manifesto as the basis of its policy on the war and recruiting, [5] the adequacy of that position however was becoming increasingly dubious. After the second conscription referendum in December, 1917 Catts took the opportunity of the first caucus meeting in the new year to move a notice of motion of signal importance for later party deliberations:

[1] Replacing Dave Watkins who retired for reasons of ill health after the 1917 elections. FPLP 13 June, 1917.

[2] Ibid. 9 July, 1917.

[3] Ibid. 10, 12, 19 July, 1917.

[4] Ibid. 26 July, 1917.

[5] In reply to representations from Victorian women socialists Ibid. Executive meeting 19 July, 2 August, 1917.

1. That immediate measures should be taken to provide for military, naval and aerial defence in order to protect the freedom and safety of Australia.
2. That the requirements of Australia in manpower should be ascertained and met with respect to
 - (a) defence of Australia
 - (b) maintenance of Australian industry
 - (c) necessities of wealth production to meet our financial obligations arising out of the war - as the first duty of Australians to Australia.
3. That voluntary recruiting of soldiers to assist the United Kingdom be based upon the Party's soldier and repatriation proposals and be subject to the foregoing Australian requirements. [1]

Formal debate on the Catts proposals was prevented by the high drama of an Opposition censure motion against Hughes, primarily over the Prime Minister's promise to resign on defeat of the referendum, in which Tudor turned in a stolid, pedestrian speech and clearly conceded debating honors on the Labor side to Catts who directly followed him. Taking full advantage of the opportunity the latter took upon himself the mantle of party spokesman and enunciated principles unblessed as yet with approval from any official quarter.

I repeat that Labor today stands where it did at the beginning of the war -

1. For the maintenance of the public law of nations
2. For the honoring of publicly made treaties
3. For the liberty of and independence of small nations.

I set out Australian war aims in this way -

1. To help Great Britain in maintaining the publicly-declared objects for which she entered the war to the best of our ability, consistently with Australia's paramount and essential needs.
2. To bring about an enduring world peace on terms of equity and justice for all mankind. [2]

[1] Ibid. 3 January, 1918.

[2] CPD 88. 15 January, 1918, p. 2957.

Two themes in particular were stressed as the most cogent reasons for Labor's position:

You cannot expect us to give you assistance when we find that, for your party purposes, you are taking advantage of the war to smash the Labor organisation ... I am for Australia first... The curse of this country has been that a number of men imported from overseas are more concerned about giving a little assistance to Great Britain at great disadvantage to Australia than in caring what becomes of Australia in the future. [1]

It was clear that Catts' role in federal caucus at this time was a leading one, far surpassing that of the titular leadership in development of policy initiatives and depended upon their aptness in an increasingly radical climate of opinion rather than his personal following or official position. Even more obvious was this climate within the state parties, where the time was increasingly ripe for severe questioning of Australian participation in the war and the form and level of any future commitment, having regard to purely domestic material and strategic interests as an Asian - Pacific country within the British Empire. However much this pressure from below corresponded with the democratic rank and file myth of party operation, it was something very different to what had been established as the norm in practice.

Illustrative of the impotence of the federal leader and his state party counterparts is the episode of the Governor-General's conference on recruiting. By early 1918 the war effort in Australia had flagged considerably. The nation had been subjected to yet another bitterly divisive campaign over introduction of conscription, war weariness and disillusionment were growing and recruiting figures were correspondingly low. Considerable ingenuity had been employed in attracting volunteers, ranging from the subtle to the crudely coercive but lack of results led some observers, including Donald Mackinnon, the Commonwealth Director - General of Recruiting in a report dated 7 February 1918, to blame the Government's credibility gap and the antagonistic political climate. [2]

[1] Ibid. p.2973

[2] Scott, Australia During the War pp. 440-443.

Mackinnon, although a Liberal cabinet member of the Victorian government who had been elevated to his federal position in late 1916 after competent handling of that state's recruiting effort, possessed a patient and conciliatory spirit and in private probably deplored the confrontationist tactics of Hughes and his supporters. Mackinnon had revealed a willingness to listen to grievances and courted the support of all sections in the community, most Labor leaders regarding him as 'fair-minded and impartial'. [1] When Captain A.C. Carmichael - former Holman Labor government minister who enlisted in 1915 and returned to become an enthusiastic recruiter - approached Mackinnon suggesting an all-party conference to attempt to forge a common approach to the recruiting drive, he found the latter to have been pondering a similar initiative.

At first Mackinnon moved cautiously, testing the idea with Hughes and Labor leaders such as Tudor and Ryan as well as influential caucus figures like J.H. Catts. Labor's response was unenthusiastic but not unfavorable, so Carmichael was sent to approach the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson (later Lord Novar) as a figure of sufficiently neutral prestige to convene such a meeting and so avoid the odium which would have inevitably attached to Nationalist government sponsorship.² Officially neutral, the British aristocrat Munro-Ferguson possessed attitudes appropriate to his class and, being a forceful individual, definite sympathies coinciding with his vice-regal duties leading to a close relationship with Hughes, whom he alternately praised as being the only political figure capable of sustaining Australian support for the Imperial cause, and despaired of for his willful and combative style and generally erratic performance. He had neither understanding for nor tolerance of what he characterised as Labor's obnoxious caucus system of operation. [3]

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- [1] Report of Alex. McCallum, general secretary of the Western Australian ALF. Minutes ALF state executive 21 April, 1918.
 - [2] Daily Standard 4 April, 1918. Tudor had been approached by Carmichael on 23 March. Minutes of Proceedings at the Conference summoned by the Governor-General on the subject of securing Reinforcements by Voluntary enlistment for the AIF. Melbourne, April 1918. CPP Session 1917-18 Vol. IV.p.54. Hereafter cited as Proceedings.
 - [3] Munro-Ferguson - Bonar Law 11 June, 1915. Novar papers 696/720-1 and 13 July, 1915 696/729 - 30.

Munro-Ferguson enthusiastically pressed the suggestion on Hughes, who agreed to the proposal at a time when the last great German offensive of the war had just begun. Invitations were sent to leaders of all parties in every state and to employer and working class organisations to assemble in Melbourne to consider the Imperial appeal for more men, 'and thereafter to endeavour to reach unanimity in favour of common policy in which all will cooperate in a supreme effort to provide adequate reinforcements for Australian Imperial Forces'. [1] Accordingly, some 40 delegates gathered at Parliament House, Melbourne from 12 - 19 April. All state Labor branches were represented though their response was neither concordant or enthusiastic.

Tudor and his deputy Albert Gardiner, obtained caucus endorsement of their acceptance only the day before conference, over the objections of Catts who wanted pre-established conditions to prevent stage-management of the conference so as to compromise the party. [2] The majority deferred to the wishes of their leaders, [3] but did instruct caucus executive to draw up a list of objectionable matters regarded as hindrances to recruiting (see below). In NSW Storey was happy to attend as state Labor leader, W.H. Lambert representing state executive only after a majority vote to that effect, [4] while Morby attended as Sydney Labor Council president on the decision of its executive. [5] From Queensland, T.J. Ryan and W.H. Demaine received approval from cabinet and state executive respectively but the Brisbane Industrial Council refused to attend any function for the facilitating of recruitment. The BIC had become increasingly radical on the issue of the war, stimulated by the 1917 referendum victory and the example of British Labour Party - TUC decisions in favor of negotiations. [6] It had developed a close

[1] Minutes ALF state executive 8 April, 1918.

[2] Daily Telegraph 4 April, 1918.

[3] FPLP 11 April, 1918.

[4] Molesworth, Material concerning the Industrial Section pp.1-6

[5] Minutes Executive Committee, Sydney Labor Council 9 April, 1918.

[6] Daily Standard 4 January, 1918.

relationship with the local branch of the Australian Peace Alliance, [1] which had increased its influence over local unions by a policy of permeation. [2] Following the 1918 Peace Alliance conference in Sydney R.S. Ross, VSP organiser and a chief speaker at the conference, made a trip to Brisbane and was present at the BIC meeting which considered the Governor-General's invitation on 10 April and at which an A.M.I.E.U. resolution declaring the search for a negotiated peace to be more important than recruiting was carried. [3]

Much the same representation resulted from Victoria. George Elmslie appeared for the PLP and J.H. Scullin the state executive, but the Melbourne THC rejected by 62 - 46 votes a recommendation from its executive that a representative be sent. [4] Elsewhere, the shortness of notice provided lent a fortuitous haste to the decision on attendance: from Adelaide a delegation of J. Jelley (PLP), Frank Lundie (state executive), and J.D. Williams (president of the United TLC) left with the concurrence of their executives only. Western Australia was represented by Collier of the PLP, ALF president P.J. O'Loughlen and general secretary McCallum after hasty approval given by the executive officers at a meeting convened at 11 a.m. on 8 April; later that evening the full executive met and revoked that decision, declaring that the leaders should not have accepted, although refraining from actually ordering them to break off their mission midway across the Nullabor. [5] Lyons was the sole Tasmanian Labor representative, on behalf of the PLP and executive, but was personally opposed to active recruiting; Hobart unions were hostile both to attendance and the sending of more recruits overseas. [6]

[1] Ibid. 18 January, 1918.

[2] Ibid. 21 January, 9 February, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 12 April, 1918.

[4] The unusual procedure of recording the division was adopted. THC Minutes 11 April, 1918.

[5] Minutes ALP state executive, 8 April, 1918.

[6] Scott, Australia During the War p.447.

Nor did this nevertheless widely representative selection of Labor leaders go without instructions from their organisations. The FPLP had met on 11 April and on the urgings of Catts appointed the executive - Tudor, Gardiner, W.G. Higgs, Mathew Charlton and Catts himself - to draft a statement on Labor's attitude to recruiting. After deliberating all day the executive reported that evening with an eleven-point list of 'matters requiring attention as a preliminary to securing national unity and the cooperation of all classes to help Britain', framed upon terms formulated by Catts the previous year in relation to soldier and repatriation policy and early in the new year in regard to the broad issues of war and recruiting attitudes. Considine moved that the party 'have nothing to do with recruiting while the present Government is in power', surprisingly being seconded by Gardiner, but this was defeated and after exclusion of extraneous matters the report was adopted by caucus, an important statement of Labor's concerns at this stage of the war. It proposed:

1. Restoration of the status, of which they have been deprived, of deregistered unions, restoration to their employment of victimised unionists, abolition of bogus unions and bureaux for the employment of scab labor. In other words, the restoration of unions and unionists to the position occupied at, and prior to, the first conscription campaign in 1916.
2. Repeal of all War Precautions Regulations not vital to the conduct of the war.

Abolition of press censorship and limitations on free speech, except as relating to military news of value to the enemy. Cessation of political and industrial prosecutions under the War Precautions Act and refund of fines and cash in connection with all political prosecutions prior to this date.
3. Adoption of Labor's Soldier and Pension policy.
4. Adoption of Labor's Repatriation policy.
5. Cost of living - genuine regulation of prices.
6. Definite and unambiguous statement of Australia's war aims.

7. The requirements of Australia in manpower to be ascertained and met with respect to
 - (a) Defence of Australia
 - (b) Maintenance of Australian production, commerce and industry as the first duty of Australians to Australia.
8. No compulsion, military or economic, upon any Australian citizen. [1]

Other Labor organisations also laid down guidelines for their delegates which, although arrived at independently, demonstrate a similarity to the FPLP statement attesting to the widespread currency of such pre-occupations. In particular South Australian Labor had presented an almost identical statement to Mackinnon personally when he had attended a state council meeting earlier that year, [2] and state executive instructed Lundie to present these again with certain additions to the Melbourne conference. [3] Similar suggestions were made by the officers of the Western Australian executive, [4] and were also reflected in remarks by AWU kingmaker in NSW, Jack Bailey. [5] Taken together, the conference records, in the words of one delegate, 'contain practically the whole of the salient features of the Labor organisation's case against the governing powers of the continent'. [6] Furthermore, these Labor delegates were far from representing the most radical elements in the movement; nine of the sixteen Labor men were parliamentarians, and the radicals may have been able to insist upon more intransigent conditions had more time been available. Refusals of participation from Brisbane, Melbourne and Hobart unionists, declarations

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- [1] FPLP evening session 11 April, 1918.
 - [2] Executive minutes, ULP Council 14 February, 1918.
 - [3] Executive report *ibid.* 11 April, 1918.
 - [4] Minutes ALF state executive 8 April, 1918.
 - [5] Age 9 April, 1918.
 - [6] Report by A. McCallum *op.cit.*

by the BIC and Hobart TLC against sending of any further reinforcements overseas - which a significant minority of the moderate Western Australian executive were disposed to support [1] - are all indications of the advanced state of disillusionment with the war.

Even as the Labor representatives arrived in Melbourne it was clear that they would be outnumbered by Nationalist politicians and employers by some six or seven votes. Only four hours before the opening session of conference the federal leader convened a Labor caucus of delegates to reveal his forebodings.

Mr. Tudor expressed his firm conviction that the Conference was a trap, and that the Commonwealth Government was behind the convening of it, and that the desire of the Commonwealth Government was that the Labor organisations would refuse to accept the invitation and give the Government an opportunity of making political capital of such action throughout Australia. [2]

General discussion ensued with Gardiner eventually moving that notwithstanding the late hour, the Labor side should withdraw; however the embarrassment occasioned by such refusal seemed to be almost as bad. Finally the meeting decided to maintain a firm insistence on keeping the proceedings open and on the public record, avoiding secret sessions or private deliberations to minimise the likelihood of being compromised with their organisations and the electorate at large. Discussion of the FPLP statement took place until debate was overtaken by the opening ceremony. Punctually at 2.30 p.m. on 12 April Munro-Ferguson welcomed the delegates, stressing in his opening address the critical situation in France and delicately observing that Australia was suffering 'a discrepancy between her will power and her man power'. [3] Conference had been convened to eliminate this discrepancy and the Governor-General suggested adoption of a resolution of his own devising announcing readiness to 'consider impartially and with all good will' such proposals for voluntary reinforcement as might be made. His Excellency then retired. Mackinnon was elected chairman and a press committee comprising the latter, Minister for Repatriation Senator Millen and Tudor was elected to supervise official releases - Labor's proposal for full press access being defeated by the other side.

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- [1] Minutes ALF state executive 15 April, 1918.
 - [2] Report by A. McCallum op.cit.
 - [3] Proceedings, p.4.

Munro-Ferguson had desired a carte blanche to be given for such proposals as the government thought necessary, whereas Labor adopted the tactics of avoiding any early commitment and drawing firm, detailed proposals from the government. With Hughes ill in bed it was left to R.B. Orchard, newly appointed Minister for Recruiting, to propose on the second day a scheme involving voluntary submission of names by eligibles to a ballot for raising the necessary numbers. [1] Labor considered this totally unsatisfactory and desired the opportunity to present their grievances; on the other hand they did not wish to be seen striking a bargain of support for renewed recruiting in return for concessions, a stand both morally crude and impracticable insofar as no delegate felt confident in committing his organisation to any specific scheme for which he held no mandate. On the same day then as the Orchard proposal, Tudor presented a five point summation of the FPLP statement as an indication of obstacles to further recruiting success. [2] If these were surmounted, he argued, Australian society would revert to the tranquil state productive of the desired cooperation, such as had existed before introduction of the apple of discord - conscription - 'fear and dread' of which even now hung over the community. [3] Tudor studiously avoided giving any undertakings, lack of which became the principle stumbling block at the conference, exemplified in the following exchange between him and W.A. Holman:

Mr. Holman - Supposing they (Labor's five demands) are done, what then?

Mr. Tudor - You will get the harmony that you have not got today ... The thing becomes automatic once you get harmony in the community.

And later with Queensland National Political Council president:

Mr. Pritchard - If these things were removed, would you be prepared to give any guarantee of more satisfactory results?

Mr. Tudor - How can I give you any more guarantee than you can? I said at the outset that every one of us could only

[1] Ibid. pp.11-16.

[2] Ibid. p.17

[3] Ibid. p.19.

... speak for himself ... This conference was called to try to obtain harmony, and I am pointing out reasons why, in our opinion, harmony does not exist today. [1]

The conference can be said to have effectively foundered upon this point, the Nationalist side requiring guarantees of Labor leaders' support of the new recruitment proposals in return for concessions, while Labor denied any interest in striking a bargain because they dared not make promises which internal party conditions could prevent them honoring. Conference adjourned over Sunday with no further progress from this position.

The Governor-General was displeased at this turn of events, rather unfairly blaming Mackinnon for letting debate drift into stalemate, [2] and wrote to Hughes observing with a note of asperity that agreement on the recruiting scheme should have been established first. A serious tactical error had been made: 'Our whole effort should be to get a promising recruiting scheme - and then let the onus of the collapse of the conference rest upon those who, having agreed to it, refuse for party reasons to support it'. He advised Hughes to present the scheme before conference again next day and, if failing to recapture the initiative, 'then the Conference cannot too soon be brought to a close. [3] Lacking fresh proposals to make, the Liberal party leader and coalition partner Sir Joseph Cook attempted on the Monday to sidetrack the bargaining into a joint committee. Labor refused and later that day Hughes made his first appearance, reading a statement strongly denying the alleged responsibility of his government for inhibiting recruiting and placing the onus for deadlock upon Labor for unpatriotic bargaining. Shrewdly, Hughes sought to create the impression of a government being forced to make undeserved concessions and he finished by moving that a committee of seven per side be formed for hammering out a deal. [4] Jelley, South Australian PLP leader,

[1] Ibid. pp. 19 - 20

[2] Munro-Ferguson - Walter Long 22 April, 1918 Novar papers 696/1025/7

[3] Munro-Ferguson - Hughes 14 April, 1918 Ibid. 696/1030

[4] Proceedings pp. 50-1

immediately countered with the demand for a public airing of grievances, instead of a covert backroom operation. Ryan and Tudor vigorously responded also - they had attended expecting a spirit of free enquiry into the reasons for low voluntary recruiting and accused the government of using the occasion as a political ploy; discussion became heated:

Mr. Hughes - ... when you have gone back to your organisations and said 'Gentlemen, if you will give that cooperation complete and cordial that the Commonwealth and State Governments require, then all these things to which you are now taking exception, all these hindrances will be swept away'. We say, 'Give us this cordial cooperation and all these things shall be added unto you'.

Mr. Ryan - And we say, 'Give us all these things and you will get cooperation automatically'.

...

Mr. Storey - The position put by Mr. Hughes is the reverse of that which we have put. We say that we will do certain things if you will give us some sort of guarantee'. [1]

On the afternoon of 16 April, after further fruitless debate, in which Hughes demanded - quite impossibly - pro-recruiting resolutions as earnest of good faith from such bodies as the NSW state executive and Sydney Labor Council, he presented an offer agreed upon by the non-Labor side in private conclave which addressed most of Tudor's grievances. [2] Labor would not be denied however and, by insisting upon consideration of Hughes' proposals seriatim, converted

[1] Ibid. p. 56

[2] Ibid. p. 71

conference proceedings into a general grievance debate lasting for three days, in which delegates embarked upon an epic presentation of all that they found wrong with pursuit of the war effort. All the Prime Minister's concessions were probed, clarified and eventually accepted, including an equivocal undertaking extracted painfully from Hughes not to resort to conscription. Having suffered this Hughes indicated on the last day of conference the payoff he expected: in return only for his 'expressed willingness' to remedy grievances, he demanded a pledge from Labor leaders in the form of a resolution promising

firstly, their full personal cooperation and, secondly, the most strenuous exertion possible of their influence with the ... organisations they respectively represent, to ensure an immediate and continuing increase in Australian recruiting on a voluntary basis. [1]

This was unacceptable to Labor, union leaders Morby and McCallum having stated bluntly that their organisations would laugh at them for acceptance of verbal undertakings from Hughes. Tudor consulted his colleagues over a short adjournment and presented a milder, non-committal motion, 'That this conference, meeting at a time of unparalleled emergency, resolves to make all possible effort to avert defeat at the hands of German militarism, and to secure an honourable and lasting peace.' [2] Hughes and Holman held out for definite undertakings, then a compromise was suggested by Victorian Nationalist Premier H.S.W. Lawson, and seconded by Collier, pledging whole hearted support for voluntarism. [3] Gardiner suggested a further amendment drafted by Victorian PLP leader George Elmslie avowing conference decisions to be productive of harmony and urging support for recruiting, a stronger formulation than the Lawson amendment. However Scullin objected that adoption of Gardiner's suggestion with amendments Hughes wanted added proclaimed a whole bargaining process and was less than honest in speaking of unity of opinion - 'We have not secured anything like what we were wishing

[1] Ibid. p.159

[2] Ibid. p. 161

[3] Ibid. p.163

to obtain'. With bad grace the Lawson amendment was carried:

That this Conference, meeting at a time of unparalleled emergency, resolves to make all possible efforts to avert defeat at the hands of German militarism and urges the people of Australia to unite in a whole hearted effort to secure the necessary reinforcements under the voluntary system. [1]

Although agreed to unanimously for the sake of form, the measure of failure of the conference was indicated by the recording in the officially released summary of proceedings Hughes' and Holman's expressions of 'regret and disappointment' at the outcome. [2]

In terms of its stated objectives the recruiting conference was a failure; a temporary influx of recruits took place in May, but it was arguable whether this had been encouraged by the negotiations, news of battle losses or the departure of Hughes for England. [3] It failed to the same extent that Australian society was divided, all delegates returning to their respective states and organisations and charging the other side with responsibility for implementation of the terms of the disguised bargain as a pre-condition of their own compliance. Even where Nationalist authorities proved cooperative it was quite another thing to remedy at a stroke all the ills of which Labor had complained. [4] Labor leaders supporting recruiting such as Storey and Ryan continued to meet humiliations at the hands of win-the-war fanatics on the public platform and the inflow of volunteers remained small. The conference exhausted the last reserves of good faith and trust in cooperation between the parties.

[1] Ibid. p. 164

[2] Summary of Proceedings, Ibid. p. VI.

[3] Munro-Ferguson - Long 18 June, 1918 op.cit. 696/1046; L.L. Robson, The First AIF: A Study of its Recruitment, 1914-1918. Melbourne, 1970 pp.192-3.

[4] For example, the vain attempt by NSW Minister for Labor, G.S. Beeby, to have the arbitration court re-register fifteen unions struck off on his own applications at the time of the 1917 strikes. A.W.16, 23 May, 1918.

Major effect upon the Labor movement generally was the marking of a shift from unenthusiastic support for the war to growing demands for withdrawal. Above all, the salient point which emerged was the attitude of the unions towards supporting the war effort; Brisbane, Melbourne and Hobart had refused to participate at all in the conference and only two union representatives did attend, Morby from NSW and Williams from Adelaide. When they returned it was to an unequivocal reception - consideration of Morby's report by the Sydney Labor Council furnished the issue which the socialist left under Judd required to defeat the moderate, craft-based leadership. In a move engineered by Judd Council endorsed a resolution cataloguing the by then familiar complaints and condemnations of the war and concluding:

we refuse to take part in any recruiting campaign and call upon the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective Governments to immediately secure an armistice on all Fronts, and initiate negotiations for peace. [1]

When Williams returned, his executive barely escaped censure for permitting his attendance at all, [2] and the TLC refused even to receive his report, much less debate it. [3] More than any other single event then, the recruiting conference revealed an almost total lack of enthusiasm for the war amongst organised Labor and a strong opposition by some influential elements to continued support for it. Such attitudes had spread to the FPLP itself, as revealed by the caucus statement on conditions for re-establishing social harmony in Australia, which concentrated upon social justice at home and domestic defence. The authority wielded by J.C. Watson or W.M. Hughes as federal Labor leaders in determining policy had vanished: instead the most influential figures had proved to be Catts and T.J. Ryan - the one a non-charismatic figure who nevertheless remained the only original thinker in caucus, the other emerging with enhanced stature and great popularity as a firm,

[1] Minutes, Sydney Labor Council 2 April, 9, 16, 30 May, 1918. See appendix.

[2] Minutes, United TLC 18 April, 3 May 1918,

[3] Ibid. 17 May, 1918.

moderate leader of immense capacity. In fact, in the aftermath of the conference comment within both the party and the general public speculating on a replacement of Tudor by Ryan was such that the FPLP felt obliged to have Tudor issue an official disclaimer. [1] Catts' policies and Ryan's prestige as a leader became henceforth the critical factors in the struggle over defence and war policy planks at the Perth ALP conference in June. Despite its failure then, the recruiting conference was an important bench-mark in the development of the party's policies and abundantly revealed the loss of initiative by the traditional innovators in these special areas. It remained to be seen how much this loss could be exploited by radicals in the state parties at the forthcoming federal ALP conference.

The agitation for peace, 1917

During 1917 the process began which was to change Labor policy in perceptible stages from simple anti-conscription to opposition to the war itself. Except for fringe left-wing groups and pacifist sects no position on the war had been advanced beyond support for Great Britain as stressed by federal Labor politicians at the elections in May. First significant departure from vague general support of a negotiated peace occurred at the NSW state Labor conference in June, 1917 and the lead given on this occasion met with such gratifying responses from other Labor parties as to encourage ambitious and far more radical pressure on Labor war policy in the following year. In both instances the initiatives came from the NSW party, where the instability of 1916 had wrought changes going far beyond those in all other states, and can only be traced against the background of the changing alignment of forces in that party.

After their victory over the politicians in 1916, and tempered by Labor electoral defeats by the Nationalist coalition under Holman in March and Hughes in May, the Industrial Section was far less prominent in 1917, meeting only monthly at Macdonnell House and not recapturing momentum until the second conscription referendum at year's end. Lack of really major questions which the state executive could

[1] FPLP 9 May, 1918.

not satisfactorily handle permitted the executive an independence from Section control which was substantial and the principle talent from 1916 transferred to the state executive or to parliament after the conscription purge. No specific war-related proposals appear to have been thrown up by the Section during the split, though it was alleged that in late December, 1916 state executive had passed a resolution by a large majority opposing participation by PLL branches or parliamentarians in the voluntary recruiting campaigns. Author of these charges was an executive member and former Sydney Labor Council president W. Cahill, who announced his resignation over the matter and made disclosures to the press. [1] Executive spokesmen denied the story in its entirety and sought to discredit Cahill as a malcontent, who had been equivocal on conscription and was merely looking for an issue on which to leave. Labor policy, it was emphasised, left participation in or support for the recruiting campaign entirely up to individual members and did not seek to direct them on it; [2] certainly NSW state and federal parliamentarians took part in some of the recruiting which followed, but the matter remained highly contentious.

Under moderate craft union-based leadership the Sydney Labor Council was quiescent and the AWU contented itself at its annual federal meeting with reiterating opposition to conscription. [3] Nevertheless domestic dissatisfactions were building up in a prelude to that great socio-political upheaval, the 1917 great strike, [4] whose climate was favorable to growth of a more radical attitude to the war. In shaping that hostility lay the chief contribution of external pressure groups.

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- [1] Register 22 December, 1916.
 - [2] Westralian Worker, 12 January, 1917.
 - [3] Official Report AWU Congress 23 January - 7 February, 1917 pp. 62-3.
 - [4] Dan Coward, 'Crime and Punishment: the Great Strike in New South Wales, August to October, 1917'. in J. Iremonger and others (eds.) Strikes Sydney, 1973.

Best organised and most important peace group to emerge in Australia during the war was the Australian Peace Alliance, formed in Melbourne within months of the outbreak of the war and founded initially upon the hard core of the Australian Freedom League, an anti-militarist organisation opposing the compulsory military training scheme implemented by Labor and Liberal governments. The APA attracted primarily religious pacifists such as the Society of Friends, and assorted socialists, most notably members of the Victorian Socialist Party. [1] With branches in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia, the success of the Alliance in the Labor movement was uneven. A branch had been established in Sydney on the basis of a weak AFL chapter on 30 November, 1915 [2] and pursued a chequered career as a pressure group. While Alliance policy was to appeal to as broad a section of society as possible to maximise support, it was obvious that its natural constituency lay in the Labor movement. This was recognised in its first platform-advocating termination of hostilities at the earliest possible moment and negotiations aimed at abolishing the causes of war, which were seen as aggressive nationalism and imperialism and defective methods of forming and exercising foreign policy. Clause (d) of the document espoused an entrust strategy towards organised Labor in addition to the normal propagandist and educative measures, viz. 'The organisation of the trade unions and workers associations, with a definite view of ending war'. [3]

[1] Unfortunately APA records preserved by F.J. Riley, one time secretary of the Alliance in Victoria, and lodged in the Riley papers, NLA are closed to researchers at the time of writing. Best single account based upon these sources is John Merritt's The Australian Peace Alliance, 1914-1922. Work-in-Progress paper, Department of History RSSS at the ANU. 27 October, 1964. By permission of the author. Turner in Industrial Labor and Politics also had access to the collection while Jauncey in Conscription in Australia possessed the advantage of near contemporaneity with his subject.

[2] Ibid. p.120

[3] Australia and the Coming Peace: A constructive Policy by J.B. Howie for the Victorian APA Council. APA Pamphlet No.1. Melbourne, 1915. See appendix.

However, the Sydney branch rejected this approach in a clash at the 1916 Easter conference of Alliance affiliates in Melbourne and broke away to promote a much simplified platform omitting reference to a specific appeal to Labor or to the effecting of an early negotiated peace. [1] Consequently, although affiliation by the Sydney Anti-Conscription League with the AUDC in late 1916 brought it ties with a number of radical union leaders, [2] it appears that no concerted effort was being made by the AUDC to influence the Labor party, a strategy only changing at the end of 1917. [3] Thus, although adoption of whole clauses from the original APA platform by the NSW Labor party in 1917 has been stressed as a direct consequence of Alliance agitation within the party, this seems doubtful, especially as the APA was in bad odour with the major Labor party executives at this stage. An APA federal conference had been scheduled for Easter, 1917 in Melbourne with as broad an appeal made as possible, but the Victorian state executive proscribed it as a threat to the party and the two Queensland delegates from the Anti-Conscription Campaign Committee, after a major row in that organisation in Brisbane, had their credentials withdrawn at the last moment and had to rely on proxy accreditation from another organisation. One of the Queensland delegates explained

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- [1] Jauncey, Conscription in Australia p. 136; Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics pp. 170-1.
 - [2] Minutes ACL 1 November, 1916; 21 February, 1917.
 - [3] See general-secretary's report. General Meeting AUDC 18 June, 1918. It also marked a change of heart and platform in a decision to re-affiliate with the parent body as the NSW branch of the APA. A.W. 4 July, 1918.

It was not only in Queensland but in every state, the Labor politicians with very few exceptions, were strongly opposed to any effort to agitate for peace... The NSW politicians were particularly hostile and were in private communication with the Queensland politicians in their endeavours to kill the conference. [1]

Only a handful of unions and the Broken Hill AMA attended from the Labor movement and the conference passed a few general resolutions contributing nothing to the earlier platform. Paradoxically then, the Alliance had its major success in terms of acceptance of its platform by the Labor party at a time when it was in strong disfavor with the party executives over its operations. Undoubtedly familiarity with the APA platform as a lucid summarisation of the peace by negotiation school facilitated co-optation of significant portions of it by the Labor party but original additions and later fundamental divergences from the Alliance position significantly reduce the party's debt to the APA. [2]

When the NSW Labor conference opened on 4 June, 1917 a formal motion on the occasion of a British Labour Party - TUC conference resolution opened up the whole subject of Australian Labor's attitude to the war. Albert Willis launched into a passionate denunciation of the conflict and moved that a committee be set up to formulate recommendations on the matter, carried after an extended debate with only one dissentient voice. [3] Most prominent committee members were Willis himself and leading Industrial Section member, Sam Rosa. While staunchly anti-conscription, Willis eschewed the socialist extremes of some of his colleagues, believing in more fundamental Christian-democratic values. [4] Rosa was Industrial Section president in 1917 and a most influential figure in that organisation. Australian born but educated in London he had been an officer of the Social Democratic Federation of Great Britain at 18

[1] E.H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk pp. 177-9.

[2] Cf. Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics p.126.

[3] A.W. 7 June, 1917.

[4] I. Young, 'A.C. Willis, Welsh Nonconformist, and the Labor Party in New South Wales 1911-1933'. Journal of Religious History 2, 1962-3. pp.303-13.

years of age and influenced by Hyndman and William Morris. After a spell in the Socialist Labor Party of America he had returned to Australia, helped organise the Social Democratic League in Melbourne, and after moving to Sydney aided organisation of the Australian Socialist League in 1890, becoming a colorful member and one-time president. Rosa had become involved in Labor politics as the first Labor Electoral Leagues were founded but advanced no further until by the time of the war he was leader writer on Norton's Sydney Truth and secured it as the only non-Labor anti-conscription paper in NSW. One of the original Industrial Section members, he had unluckily missed out in the rush for office created by the conscription purge after topping preselection for Hughes' seat of West Sydney, when he was disqualified for illegal canvassing. All his energies were then channeled through the Industrial Section. Another member of the committee, M. P. Considine, had been elected in May to the federal seat of Barrier, encompassing the militant stronghold of Broken Hill, and then regarded parliament with socialist scorn as a convenient platform. Two state Legislative Assembly men, T. D. Mutch and W. Davies, were of rather more moderate disposition and together with a Mrs. Locke Burns made up the rest of the committee. Arthur Rae was appointed secretary; he at least had known Peace Alliance sympathies though none appear to have had formal connections with that organisation.

On 8 June the committee report was circulated at conference in close secrecy to prevent press criticism. Rosa immediately moved that the debate be adjourned over the weekend to permit 'discussion within the movement', that is perusal by the Industrial Section. Both Willis and newly-elected PLP leader John Storey opposed direction from this quarter and debate was initiated straightaway. Though Storey and state vice-president Dave Guihen criticised the proposals as too radical, they were unable to muster support for an addendum to qualify the preamble by a declaration of staunch support for Britain and her Allies. By the end of the day the major clauses had won approval. Peace Alliance influence was obvious in the preamble attributing responsibility for the war to a system of capitalist production and demanding initiation of immediate negotiations to obtain equitable terms of peace. There followed a nine-point program based upon APA demands:

1. The right of small nations, including Ireland, to political independence.
2. That the European countries invaded during the present war be immediately evacuated and their future territorial integrity guaranteed - provided that the ownership of disputed territories shall be determined by a plebiscite of the inhabitants under the protection of an international commission. This course would dispose of Alsace-Lorraine, Poland and similar cases on the democratic principle that all just government must rest on the consent of governed.
3. That prior to the disbandment of the ~~combatant~~ armies they shall be utilised under international control for the restoration of the devastated territories at the expense of the invaders.
4. That where an amicable agreement cannot be reached by the peace conference in regard to captured colonies and dependencies, such territories shall be placed provisionally under international control.
5. That the freedom of the seas be secured on the lines laid down by President Wilson of America in May, 1916 where he advocated 'A universal association of the nations to maintain the inviolate security of the highway of the seas for the common and unhindered use of all the nations of the world'.
6. The abolition of trading in armaments and the prohibition of private manufacture thereof.
7. The abolition of conscription in all countries simultaneously.
8. The control of foreign relations under a democratic system based upon publicity, in lieu of the present methods of secret diplomacy.
9. That the existing machinery for international arbitration be expanded to embrace a Concert of Europe, ultimately merging into a world-wide Parliament as advocated by President Wilson in a recent message to the American Congress. [1]

[1] S.M.H. 11, 12 June, 1917. See appendix for full text of peace plank as adopted in enlarged form at ALP federal conference, 1918.

Ireland found many champions during the debate, resulting in the specific reference in point one. Significantly, inclusion of the other British colonies, such as Egypt and India, under this demand was rejected, one committee member alluding to the 'immense colored race problem that would arise' should such an ambitious scope be accepted. The proposals were endorsed in toto on 11 June after the weekend break during which it appears no attempt was made by the industrialists to upset them, and it was determined to disseminate the plank amongst the other Labor parties and abroad. [1] In content it reflected the prevailing current of opinion within large sections of the movement, drawing freely from the same sources which had already influenced the Peace Alliance and other socialist bodies generally. Most notably, the plank drew for its specific recommendations upon the program of the British Union of Democratic Control, [2] but also from current European Marxist thinking on the war, as represented by the Zimmerwald conference declaration of anti-war socialists, from the idealistic internationalism addressed by Woodrow Wilson, and specifically Australian features such as anti-conscriptionism and anti-imperialism in its Irish context. Within twelve months, a slightly expanded version had won unanimous endorsement from all other bodies making up the ALP and was referred by the federal executive officers to the British Labour party later in 1917 as representing ALP policy on the war. [3]

[1] Ibid. 11, 12, 20 June, 1917.

[2] This organisation in the United Kingdom was to exercise a powerful influence there, being founded by disaffected Liberals primarily, but obtaining its greatest mass support from the British Labour party. At the end of 1917 the UDC had its program adopted virtually in its entirety by the Joint British Labour party - TUC conference. See the study by M. Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the first World War. Oxford, 1971 and P. Stansky (ed.) The Left and War: The British Labour Party and World War 1. O.U.P., 1969.

[3] Adopted by the Queensland executive, CPE Minutes 16 July, 1917, and state conference, Official Report Labor-in-Politics Convention 31 January, 1918; with direct representations from Willis before the Victorian party, Official Report Victorian state conference 7-9 July, 1917 pp. 18-19; in Tasmania, Minutes state executive 15 August, 1917; in South Australia, Minutes state conference 10 September, 1917; Western Australia, Minutes state executive 6 August, 1917; endorsed by the AWU, Official Report AWU National Congress 22 February, 1918 pp. 75-6; and finally, the ALP federal executive, Report of federal executive delegates, Minutes S.A. Council 9 August, 1917.

Until ratification and further development by the ALP federal conference in June, 1918 the NSW peace plank represented the consensus of Labor opinion on the war, being most obviously deficient in prescribing actual policies on recruiting and the Australian war effort generally. The efforts to repair this also stemmed from the NSW Labor party.

NSW Labor and recruiting, 1917.

When the second referendum on conscription took place the NSW party had been embittered by the severe reverses suffered in the great strike of August - October and its aftermath. In itself the strike phenomenon in the state was a crystallisation of material grievances and social fears and a high degree of class conscious militancy in the Labor movement which account for the readiness of support, breadth and duration of what amounted to a deep seated social conflict. Such a militant reaction in defence of 'trade unionism' and other working class values suggests the reasons for susceptibility of the mass movement to radical policies on the war and Australian participation articulated by opinion leading elites. Briefly, the activities of unionists in their work situation both encouraged and validated the class conflict ideology which became pervasive in the party during the war and in succeeding years. Given this atmosphere, reintroduction of the conscription issue in late 1917 was no surprise; socialists in the Sydney Labor Council having raised the possibility in mid-year; [1] a sub-committee was formed which reported to a joint meeting of Council and unaffiliated unions on 14 June and was accorded full powers to deal with the whole question should it revive. [2] Main fear was of imposition of conscription by regulation under Hughes' returned Nationalist government and a second referendum was not anticipated. [3] Chief participants in Labor's December

[1] Minutes Sydney Labor Council 10, 31 May, 1917.

[2] Ibid. 16 June, 1917.

[3] Statement by E.E. Judd ibid. 5 July, 1917.

campaign were parliamentarians and the AWU, which by non-involvement in the strikes had retained its strength. [1] Once again though the state returned a substantial No majority:

NSW	Yes	No
1916	356,805	474,544
1917	341,256	487,774

Certainly the strikes did not diminish the extent of mass discontent and the final year of the war saw a culmination of all the exasperations suffered in the preceding three years: in the Labor party, focus for union and party rank and file unhappiness, this was manifested in the development of strong opposition to further support for the war itself. Dissatisfactions were general but by chance the first break occurred in the Labor Council at the instigation of the socialist left. Representatives from the NSW Labor movement on the Governor-General's recruiting conference in early April, 1918 were PLP Leader John Storey, W.H. Lambert, the state president, and William Morby, president of the Labor Council. Whereas Lambert maintained neutrality, both Storey and Morby supported the voluntary effort to reinforce the A.I.F. and were faced upon their return with serious challenges on the issue. Morby reported to the Council on 2 May and was accompanied by Lambert and Rosa who recounted their suspicions of the federal government promises. Rosa warned delegates of the 'reign of terror' under the War Precautions Act and after loss of a motion by a narrow margin to hold the discussion in camera, counselled them against saying anything that could be construed as prejudicial

[1] Claims by Jack Bailey, however, in Information for Political and Industrial Students, loc.cit, that the AWU single-handedly defeated the referendum cannot be seriously entertained. More accurate was the observation of the General Secretary of the Western Australian A.L.F. who drew an unflattering picture of the post-strike union movement in NSW and did not attribute the state result to Labor leadership at all: 'It is obvious from the most casual enquiry that conscription was defeated from without, not from within'. 'Report by A. McCallum on the result of the strike in the Eastern States - arising out of the introduction of the Card System.' n.d. ALF State Executive correspondence file 85: Reports - general.

to recruiting by the authorities. [1] Nevertheless, when Council reconvened next week and Morby moved endorsement of the recruiting conference resolution that all parties turn their energies to making recruiting a success, opposition was determined and vociferous. Under the leadership of Socialist Labor Party member Ernie Judd the left circulated a statement condemning the war as a capitalist quarrel and all forms of militarism as contrary to working class interests, concluding defiantly that

Therefore, whilst fully expecting anti-Labor forces to misrepresent and calumniate our action, we refuse to take part in any recruiting campaign and call upon the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective governments to immediately secure an Armistice on all Fronts and initiate negotiations for peace. [2]

The whole second meeting was confined to arguments for and against recruiting by Morby and Judd. [3]

Both Labor Council factions organised strenuously. At a following meeting the chairman ruled Judd's statement out of order as a direct negative to Morby's motion but the ruling was overturned, 81 - 54 votes, the first crack in the moderate majority. [4] Judd sensed the critical moment and moved that Morby's motion be ruled out of order instead for conflicting with the Labor Council endorsement in

[1] Minutes Special Meeting Labor Council 2 May, 1918; Sun 3 May, 1918. These inhibitions, perfectly justified in view of the liberal use of censorship provisions and wartime regulations, had the general effect of stifling debate in the movement and reducing much of it to elliptical or prevaricating public statements. Council records are laconic during this episode.

[2] See appendix for full text. Judd admitted to authorship a week later, Sun. 17 May, 1918. The circular was given a wide currency and prompted immediate action by the censor, Judd being prosecuted for both its contents and his supporting speeches.

[3] Ibid. 16 May, 1918.

[4] One report blamed the attempt to rule out the amendment for its victory by needlessly antagonising many in the middle ground. Sun. 17 May, 1918.

January of the 1917 NSW peace proposals. Amid scenes of high disorder this retaliatory action was carried 79 - 75 and the Judd amendment became the motion. [1] Storey, who had attended each meeting hitherto as a visitor, chose this time to intervene but, given fifteen minutes to speak, he was forced to discontinue in a tumult of interjections and amidst general uproar Morby adjourned the meeting, leaving Judd and Boote to harangue the excited delegates. [2] Echoes of this dramatic turn resounded in following days in which at least one delegate resigned and a schism was foreshadowed. [3] Both sides openly marshalled their forces for the next meeting and a small group led by McGrath of the Printing Industry Employees began organisation of a new industrial representative body. The arguments supporting the Morby case for trusting the government were not assisted moreover when Justice Heydon of the state arbitration court, after consultation with his learned colleagues, rejected Holman's promised application to cancel deregistration of certain unions for participation in the 1917 strikes. [4] One attempt at compromise nevertheless was heralded when the Electrical Trades Union announced it would submit an amendment proclaiming that it was necessary to support the war, at least until the Central Powers evinced a sincere desire to negotiate. While rejecting win-the-war patriots, it equally condemned peace-at-any-price fanatics and although disparaging the Governor-General's conference as a political trick, endorsed the agreement reached there and made further suggestions which it was hoped would facilitate recruiting. [5] Undoubtedly this position stood a good chance of attracting the middle ground between the Morby/Judd extremes but it was not to be given a chance.

[1] Minutes Special Meeting Labor Council 16 May, 1918.

[2] Sun 17 May, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 19, 20 May, 1918.

[4] Ibid. 21 May, 1918.

[5] Ibid.

One day before the next scheduled Council meeting the executive of the Municipal Employees' Union in collusion with Morby withdrew Judd's credential and presented him with his clearance on very dubious charges pertaining to administrative activities. Morby then imposed strict door control procedures to ensure that Judd was kept out. It was a cheap shot of personal antagonism which must only have alienated many moderates and did nothing to assuage the serious doubts of the delegates which the radicals were addressing. It failed, Judd arriving with impeccable timing a few minutes before opening of the 23 May meeting with a credential from a sympathetic union, [1] whereupon Morby flung open the meeting to visitors and used the resulting uproar to declare the meeting adjourned. Many delegates remained after Morby swept out and Judd seized control of the meeting: a chairman was elected and Judd explained the manoeuvre against him as a plot assisted with advice from the Premier's office. An attempt to roll the entire executive was headed off by the acting-secretary, J.S. 'Jock' Garden, on the grounds of its uncertain legality and the proximity in any case of the annual elections next month. This meeting was then adjourned, still without a vote on the anti-recruiting motion. [2] Executive ruled that the 30 May meeting would be closed and strictly controlled, [3] and on its eve the Judd faction held a rally of supporters addressed by Judd himself, Henry Boote and Arthur Rae. [4] Their hard core opponents gave up the cause and some broke away to form a provisionally titled Labour Federation of NSW, [5] which remained small and was quickly seen as insignificant: Morby himself chose to remain within the Council.

On this issue the radicals had the numbers, a further attempt at compromise charging the governments and employers with responsibility for creating conditions conducive to voluntary recruiting was defeated 95 - 79 and Judd's motion was carried 101 - 75. [6] While the size

[1] The Miscellaneous Workers A.W.6, 13 June, 1918.

[2] Sun 24 May; A.W.30 May, 1918. No official record of the meeting exists in Council minutes.

[3] Sun 29 May, 1918.

[4] A.W. 6 June, 1918.

[5] Sun 25, 27 May, 1918.

[6] Minutes Special Meeting Labor Council 30 May, 1918.

of the minority in favor of the compromise is noteworthy, Morby's tactics probably largely prejudiced his case with the undecided element. An immediate outcome was disaffiliation by the Newcastle TLC and defeat of Morby by Garden for the position of Labor Council secretary in a 97 - 44 vote. [1] By standing his ground however Morby succeeded in beating the AWU outsider Jack Bailey for the presidency of Council by 74 - 65 later in the year, [2] although only at the expense of appearing alongside such as Willis, Rae, Garden and Judd as a supporter of the One Big Union. [3] An attempt by Judd to expel Morby from office over administrative malfeasance failed badly. [4] Doubtless, antagonism between craft unions and more militant industrial unions played a part in this dispute, one union official referring to the breakaway group as the 'aristocracy of labor' which had been antagonistic to Council affiliation with large unions, such as the AWU and Coalminers, and pro-conscription in sympathies. In Newcastle this configuration of forces had been revealed in an earlier schism, larger unions setting up a Newcastle Industrial Council in opposition to the craft-led TLC and both groups divided upon the Judd resolution on these terms. [5] Indeed, Jock Garden played up the support he divined from the split for closer unionism under the O.B.U., [6] but probably most important for the radicals' success was the extent of support their position on the war was finding within the movement. As one PLP member, W. O'Brien said:

The delegates following Mr. Judd were supporters of the union movement but their support did not necessarily mean that they would assist in his party political views. He had command of the majority of the Council and the significance of this was that the delegates on his side represented the feelings of the big majority of the people of Australia in regard to the war. [7]

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- [1] Ibid. Garden had heavy editorial backing from Boote A.W. 30 May, 1918.
 - [2] A.W. 8 August, 1918.
 - [3] Ibid. 15 August; Daily Telegraph 7 October, 1918.
 - [4] Minutes Labor Council 1, 15 August. In a vote 77-48, then division 83-53. A.W. 22 August, 1918.
 - [5] A.W. 20 June, 1918.
 - [6] Even at the end of the year ten unions remained suspicious of any re-affiliation moves, citing the OBU scheme. Daily Telegraph 22 October, 1918.
 - [7] W. O'Brien MLA in the Domain 26 May. A.W. 30 May, 1918.

Judd's ascendancy failed to bear fruit in a vendetta against Morby, supporting the interpretation that it was the radical issues which were winning adherents: reports by Peace Alliance and S.L.P. officials at this time note an increasingly favorable reception for anti-war propaganda which the Labor Council and industrialist radicals eagerly exploited. [1]

The NSW Labor party opposes the war.

That the initiative had been taken in the Labor Council was simply fortuitous: the Industrial Vigilance Council (In 1918 the Industrial Section changed its name to one seen as more accurately reflecting its breadth of support in the Labor party) determined to consider Labor's attitude to the war as early as 12 April but did not actually appoint a sub-committee on it until 10 May, when Judd had already formulated his proposal. While links between the Labor Council radicals and the I.V.C. are unclear, generally speaking the latter group were career unionists fully oriented towards parliamentary strategy, whereas the Judd group tended to abhor parliamentary Labor politics and concentrated upon organising in the unions. [2] Arthur Rae, who never joined the IVC on principle, was one party official who courted the socialist left but apart from him Judd's main supporter appears to have been Henry Boote who certainly did not reflect the official AWU line. The IVC remained as an effective lever for moving the state Labor conference and through it the federal ALP, and as such remained a prize of great potential.

With the focus for activists in the large unions shifting to the newly available parliamentary positions and the state executive, power within the IVC shifted to a group of radicals different to the

[1] Secretary's report, Annual Meeting of the Australian Union of Democratic Control 18 June, 1918. A.W. 4 July, 1918 and the Australian Socialist Party Annual Report, International Socialist 26 January, 1918.

[2] The S.L.P. had already split over this issue. Socialist 1 June, 1917; The War and the Sydney Labor Council. An address delivered by E.E. Judd at Trades Hall, Sydney, 8 March, 1917. S.L.P. pamphlet, Sydney, 1917 gives the defence of standing socialist candidates against endorsed Labor men.

AWU bosses and Miners' representatives who had founded the original section. The new leaders were also ready to use the machinery for self-advancement - a popular jibe portrayed the IVC being run by 'thirty wealthy farmers who owned motor cars and twenty aspiring politicians' [1] - and one principle figure, J. Power, had unsuccessfully nominated against sitting state and federal members; [2] many others were alleged to be interested in obtaining their share of the spoils of office. [3] By 1918 there were some 68 regular affiliates, unions and leagues in the Sydney area mainly who supplied the hard core of attendance throughout the year between annual party conferences, when the Vigilance Council began its vital work of co-opting conference delegates, deciding the ticket for party leadership and formulating its policies for the year. Some regular attenders were founding members serving as monitors of activity for their organisations, like Jack Cullinan, AWU, while others participated out of dread fascination with the machine such as C.C. Lazzarini, MLA, another original member, or Vol Molesworth, a journalist representing the Auburn P.L.L. To Molesworth's jaundiced eye at his first IVC meeting,

The remainder ... contained the usual crop of union and league officials. None showed outstanding brilliancy but all possessing the usual stock phrases of 'class war', 'humanity is the only country I recognise', 'solidarity' and so on. [4]

Although he pretended to detect a spirit of 'Bolshevism' in the organisation, Molesworth himself paid grudging tribute to 'this little band of hard working (and mainly sincere) extremists who have control', [5] and in fact these men did reflect genuine attitudes abroad in the Labor movement. I.V.C. control of the party was most intense at the state conferences but, as adoption of the 1917 peace plank demonstrates,

[1] Report of 1918 Labor conference, A.W. 20 June, 1918.

[2] Molesworth, Material concerning the Industrial Section p.37

[3] Ibid. pp. 1 - 3.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Molesworth - T.J. Ryan 18 May, 1918. Ibid. pp.14-16.

it was not responsible for every major accomplishment there. Having supplied the state executive by means of the ticket, Vigilance Council scrutiny of its nominees, who could not hold simultaneous I.V.C. membership, was reduced to regular reports of activities from the state president and on important issues the executive appeared capable of quite independent action and the IVC proved no less susceptible to the persuasive wiles of parliamentarians than any previous body, [1]. To exercise control on matters of policy as they arose the IVC needed time to marshal its forces and follow up its decisions: just such an issue as the controversy over Labor's war policy provided.

Stimulated by the Governor-General's initiative on recruiting, and with a view to forthcoming state and federal Labor conferences, the IVC set up a sub-committee at a joint meeting with the state executive on 10 May to discuss results of the Governor-General's conference. Comprising state president Lambert and IVC radicals Rosa and Power, this reported a week later to a similar meeting at Macdonnell House. Its report reviewed the failure of calls for peace negotiations such as that in 1917 to elicit any response and proclaimed the need for a bold declaration of Labor beliefs rejecting the aim of a 'knock out blow' and blaming capitalist greed, ambition and chauvinism for prolongation of the war. Turning to Australia's own position the report drew attention to the nation's exposure as the 'lone outpost of white civilisation', menaced by a danger growing worse by the day which was compounded by the government-encouraged 'mad stampede' of able bodied defenders to Europe with grave consequences for local defence, industrial output and the financial burden. 'The remainder of the policy proposed that all future war activities in Australia should be in the direction of preparing for the defence of Australia in Australia, particular reference being made to the Japanese menace' . [2] The most vital provisions were the

[1] On April 26, 1918 for example PLP Leader Storey was carpeted for speeches he had made on recruiting. Storey treated the Vigilants to a flow of oratory and, far from sacrificing his belief that conscription might yet prove necessary, turned aside a motion of censure and won a unanimous vote of confidence in his leadership. Ibid. p.1-6.

[2] V. Molesworth ibid. p. 6.

conclusions, recommending that:

Taking these facts in conjunction with our Government's refusal to negotiate for peace, this conference therefore declares:-

- (a) That the policy of the ALP is opposed to any men in future leaving Australia for military service abroad.
- (b) That, failing the consent of the Imperial authorities to at once open up negotiations for peace, the Australian divisions on service abroad be brought back to Australia.
- (c) That we call upon the organised workers of every country engaged in the war to take similar action.

Consideration of the report was then undertaken seriatim. Rosa argued that adoption of the policy would enable the Labor party to re-establish its support in Australia. More accurate predictions were made by several delegates, including Molesworth, who argued that the proposals were not only futile but dangerous, inviting conscription from a backlash they would provoke if publicly advocated. Vehement opposition was declared by John Storey and T.D. Mutch, MLA but despite this resistance and, according to Molesworth, after many of the opposing delegates had left in disgust the first clause was carried by 35 - 8 votes and the meeting adjourned until 19 May for consideration of the remainder, which it appears were also carried. [1]

[1] Ibid. pp.7-10. The IVC itself does not appear to have had separate minutes and because meetings were closed to press and public, members were free to debate uninhibited by the War Precautions Act. We are dependent upon Molesworth's personal recollections and documents for the crucial events accounted here, namely Material concerning the Industrial Section, *ibid*; Full Story and Documents with history of the Industrial Section of the ALP. Uncat MSS Set 71, Item 2; The Story of the New South Wales Labor Party from its inception in 1890 to 1917, including its reconstruction in 1916. MS typescript dated January, 1918. 239 pp. Uncat. MSS Set 243/5/14; Industrial Vigilance Council letters and notes 1918. Uncat MSS Set 243/2/1,10. Molesworth attended IVC meetings from April, 1918 first out of curiosity, then became a supporter of the AWU faction, was elected to its executive and wrote its epitaph when it was finally broken up in 1919. His hostile account is supported by documents, notably Proposals for discussion re the attitude of the Labor movement on war and recruiting (incomplete) in Material Concerning the Industrial Section pp.34-35 and information leaked to the press eg. SMH 20 June, 1918.

Motivations behind these proposals were several: war weariness, the widening currency of left wing and radical ideology stimulated by such events as the great strike and Bolshevik successes in Russia, resentment of the infringements of liberty under wartime regulation, disillusionment with the course of the conflict and lapses on the Allied side, not least of which were the treatment of Ireland and attempts at imposing conscription in Australia. There was abroad also that feeling, bred of desperation, that a retreat to basic principles in the face of electoral adversity was the only road to salvation. One crucial factor however was the extent to which home defence had become a real matter of concern. Anti-Japanese sentiment from before the war flourished during the conscription campaigns and, used by Hughes as an argument in favor of acceptance of compulsion, had taken root with a vengeance by 1918 in an unintended form. Many Labor men argued the necessity to concentrate Australian resources at home, even at the expense of the European commitment which dragged on in indecisiveness as fears of Japan increased. Paradoxically the belief exerted a powerful appeal over the broad spectrum of Labor opinion, equally seizing radicals and moderates. Judd alluded to Japan indirectly in his case against recruiting made before the Sydney Labor Council, dilated upon further when he was tried for making statements in that speech prejudicial to recruiting.

I believe that if the virile manhood of the white races was killed off, and the enormous colored populations living adjacent to Australia left intact, that it would be practically an invitation to their rulers to strike when they knew the manhood of the white races was so bled that they would not be able to put up a fight. [1]

His apprehension was so powerful that it led this revolutionary socialist to look favorably upon maintenance of European colonies to Australia's north as hostages against the Japanese thrust. [2] Within the IVC-state executive it was the motivation permeating the proposals on war, recruiting and defence, even W.H. Lambert stating that he was

[1] Judd's Speech from the Dock, SLP pamphlet. Sydney, 1919 pp. 52-3; also the information laid for the second indictment, ibid.

[2] Ibid, p. 53.

'prepared to take up the gun against the Jap'. [1] Moderate Labor opinion was also affected; the AWU in national conference had narrowly asserted a greater fear of the Asian than of militarism by agreeing 15 - 12 to retain an amended scheme of compulsory training for Australia.[2] J.H. Catts' obsession over the Japanese threat was well known and he was more concerned with the electoral consequences of the 1918 peace proposals than the reasoning behind them.

Opposition to the radical position was not confined solely to the ranks of the parliamentarians, as the debates at the Labor Council and IVC confirm. Upon the shoulders though of the Labor politicians would fall the consequences of party approval of such policies. Storey himself attributed loss of the Upper Hunter by-election in early June, in which he had pronounced continued support of recruiting, to the effects of the Labor Council and state conference stands [3], apart from any personal objections to the policy itself and the PLP shared his views. [4] Federal members Arthur Blakeley MHR, Senator Gardiner and Catts recognised the danger [5] and Molesworth was so pessimistic as to the chances of opposing the policy at state conference in the current climate that he attempted, unsuccessfully, to enlist the support of Queensland leaders T.J. Ryan and E.G. Theodore for a last minute appeal. [6] Conceding that there would be 'easily an ascendancy of anti-war delegates' on conference the moderates settled for a more indirect strategy:

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- [1] Material concerning the Industrial Section p.8.
 - [2] Official Report AWU Convention 16 February 1918 pp.58-9.
 - [3] Daily Telegraph 8 June, 1918.
 - [4] The Telegraph reported that a majority of members ridiculed the proposals'. Ibid. 13 June, 1918. Con. Wallace, MLA told Molesworth that the party 'will never stand for it'. Material concerning the Industrial Section pp.17-18.
 - [5] Ibid.
 - [6] V. Molesworth - Ryan 18 May, 1918. ibid. pp.14-16; Ryan - Molesworth 5 June (?), 1918. ibid. p.23

Realising the impossibility of defeating the absolute anti-war and anti-peace proposals the moderate section decided to modify them wherever possible, and to modify the personnel of the six delegates to the Interstate Conference to assemble at Perth on July 17.[1]

This objective proved successful when state conference met, 1 - 15 June, in debates totalling over 27 sitting hours on this one topic, speakers being confined in the main to five minute speeches. [2] Circulars were distributed and debate began on 3 June, conference going into committee on the motion of Rosa who argued 'it was important that these matters should not be discussed openly'. [3] Four agenda items of far more innocuous nature were discarded in favor of the scaled down executive/industrialist proposal and the issue was concluded on the night of Saturday 8 June, the last possible moment for despatch of the federal conference delegation, with the state secretary merely informing the press that the discussion was to be resumed in Perth.

As had been hoped some modifications of the proposal were effected but the substance of the recommendations was preserved in the eventual resolution. [4] Where the moderates did triumph was in alteration of the composition of the federal conference delegation by substitution of two of their own number for a pair of union radicals, thus ensuring what later proved to be the critical margin in federal voting on the NSW policy. In anticipation of the proposed federal conference in 1917 a delegation of six members had been elected for NSW at the preceding Easter, comprising Arthur Rae, A.C. Willis, J. Power, Gavan Sutherland, J.J. Graves and May Mathews. All except Rae were industrialists although Willis, a party vice-president, had suffered second thoughts as to the value of the IVC. Nevertheless at least four and possibly five of the 1917 delegation would have voted for the new policy in Perth, so reduction of the staunch radical element to a bare two was a major coup and reflected a basic shift once again in the power structure within the party. This change was precipitated when leading figures behind formation of the original industrial

[1] Ibid. p.19.

[2] Sun, 9 June, 1918.

[3] An amendment to admit only the Labor press was defeated 82-53, the motion passing 93-31, much to the displeasure of the Worker A.W.6 June, 1918.

[4] Daily Telegraph 10 June, 1918; Material concerning the Industrial Section p.32. See appendix.

faction decided that it had served its purpose well and was no longer justified. Having won promotion to the state executive and filling the parliamentary seats of their vanquished opponents of 1916, prominent leaders of the AWU and Miners' Federation were not averse to kicking away the ladder to office they themselves had so lately ascended and accordingly decided to bring the IVC back under control. Adoption of the war and defence proposals did not alone precipitate this decision, which had been forming for some twelve months but no doubt emphasised the dangers of tolerating such an unpredictable body.

Matters had come to a head at the IVC meeting on Sunday 2 June, essentially the usual pre-conference caucus of industrial vigilants, at which the agenda was reviewed and, most vitally, the ticket for the next year's party executive was chosen. As the chief faction in the party, IVC selection was mandatory for party officer and state executive aspirants. Rosa, Adler, Power and other radicals ruling the IVC realised this and had attempted to restrict voting for the ticket to the regular 45 unions and 23 branches. The AWU however, relying on the IVC rule whereby any conference delegates could be co-opted, 'nobbled' some 30 country delegates as they arrived in Sydney and under the organisation of Bailey and C.B. Trefle these were added to the 25 AWU delegates and 15 Miners' Federation representatives who met on Sunday morning to receive instructions. As a clear half of the 150 or so delegates currently supporting the IVC at the official Sunday afternoon meeting, the AWU-Miner leadership could rely upon sympathetic Sydney regulars to dominate the proceedings. This proved to be the case, Lambert easily defeating Rosa for the ticket endorsement as president, while Bailey and Willis captured the vice-presidencies with Rosa again knocked out. Willis then moved that there be no ticket for the 30-member executive committee but was ruled out of order; as pre-arranged it was then moved that the IVC devise a ticket for only half of the places, leaving the other 15 to be supplied by free vote of conference. By this means they hoped to use their numbers to fill the 15 places with AWU and Miner nominees, leaving out in the cold the 'red hot industrialists who always got in on the back of the AWU and big union vote'. [1] Rosa and his supporters would then have to take their chances with the unattached candidates like Arthur Rae in open conference in a brawl for

[1] Material concerning the Industrial Section, op. cit.
pp. 19-21.

the remaining 15 places, which could be reduced even further if the parliamentarians could be reserved some of those ex officio. Radical president O.C. Johnson declared this also a contravention of Council orders and the gambit failed but even so, despite John Power topping the poll of the 62 nominees, Rosa himself only achieved twenty-ninth spot, scraping in by three votes only in a decisive defeat for the radicals.

[1] Most importantly the IVC resolved at the Sunday meeting to leave composition of the federal delegation an open question rather than pre-determine it by a ticket. Moved by Power himself in the face of these reverses through fear that an AWU-Miner vote here would also wipe out the radicals' strength, his opponents also seemed content to leave it to conference. [2]

Because of these manoeuvres there was no ticket for the six federal delegation positions when its composition arose after conference had terminated discussion of the war policy. The radicals urged that the 1917 selection be confirmed, if only because of the inconvenience caused by any such late changes, but Catts and others persuaded conference to hold a fresh ballot as a result of which the two IVC supporters Graves and Mathews were supplanted by the parliamentarians Catts and T.D. Mutch, MLA. [3] Although it was argued in justification of the change that more experienced men should be sent to such an important federal meeting, the opposition of both Catts and Mutch to the radical attitudes represented by such as May Mathews was quite clear to the participants. [4] In the light of this revised delegation Rosa moved that conference bind the six representatives in support of the agreed policy: this was carried but Rae immediately rose and insisted

[1] Next week, at the annual meeting of the IVC, the AWU succeeded narrowly in placing its own man George Buckland in the presidency, Tom Bartle in the secretaryship and three sympathisers on the IVC executive, giving it 5 of the 9 elected IVC positions. The ticket was successful at conference in the intervening week but many members broke it, no doubt as a result of this bewildering struggle. *Ibid.* p.22.

[2] *Ibid.* p.21.

[3] The order of election was Rae, Willis, Catts, Power, Mutch and Sutherland. P.C. Evans, state secretary, came within 30 votes of the last elected, Sutherland, while Mathews and Graves polled even lower down. *Ibid.* p.32.

[4] *Ibid.* pp.8-9 for contrasting views by Mutch and Mathews. For Catts' attitude see above.

that, while loyally supporting the decisions, delegates would 'of course, have to compromise where they could not get their objective absolutely'. [1] With this last equivocation, the moderates could look with some satisfaction upon their efforts at state conference in toning down the radical policy and undermining the chances of its adoption at federal level. Molesworth met Ryan at the latter's hotel on 11 June after the NSW delegation had already left and briefed the Premier on the latest events, concluding that at least three of the NSW group would break ranks if given the opportunity by a vote on the NSW policy in secret ballot, [2] providing Ryan also with detailed information to use against the radicals. [3] Almost as a corollary of the Japanese fear, the IVC had also endorsed compulsory military training and made separate recommendations to the conference in a circular, signed by Arthur Rae as secretary of the initiating committee, [3] containing a straight summary of the White Australia vs. Asian hordes scenario; Australia was prey to the crushing numbers of certain alien Races menacing her and her standards. 'The only reliable defence of Australia must be local defence': nine recommendations being made to achieve this end, ranging from compulsory training and independence in munitions production to submarine and aerial defence of Australian shores. These proposals, in contrast to those on participation in the war raised nothing objectionable to the moderates and an amendment to their adoption in favor of abolition of compulsory clauses in the Defence Act was beaten 168 - 38, [4] although it was decided to support democratisation of the Act and raising of the age qualification for initial training to 18 years. [5] Thus instructed the NSW delegates departed for the federal arena.

[1] Ibid. p.32.

[2] Ibid. p. 24.

[3] Memo to Mr. Ryan n.d. ibid. pp.37-40.

[4] Ibid. p. 34. See appendix.

[5] Gavan Sutherland's figures. Report ALP Federal Conference. 21 June, 1918 p.35.

The 1918 federal ALP conference

At no time is the formal structure of a party subjected to greater strain than over an extended crisis period. The Labor special federal conference in 1916 was called expressly to deal with the conscription issue and was anticipated by the FPLP split, caused by disintegration of that party and the intransigent stands of the eastern state parties. Federal conference formalised the situation and caused the South Australian and West Australian Labor parties to conform, the problem being essentially reassertion of authority by the federal ALP structure. In 1918 the formal structural processes were recognised by participants and the chief question was their adequacy for the formulation of a single, acceptable policy for the ALP which was also politically apt in the broader Australian community. Nowhere was the complex, multi-centric process of policy making better demonstrated than in the deliberations upon participation in the war, the voluntary recruiting scheme and the federal defence plank, upon which subjects no fewer than 43 separate resolutions had been included in the 54 page agenda distributed to the parties in the preceding weeks. Too late for inclusion were the proposals on conditional further participation in the conflict adopted by the NSW party on the eve of the departure of its delegation and deliberately withheld from general publication. In aggregate, the items submitted covered every point in the spectrum of opinion within the ALP, from the mildly reformist to the uncompromisingly radical. While, ostensibly, most delegations had been bound to support specified positions on these issues, such was the divergence between recommendations that compromise was inevitable and in its pursuit the initiative of delegates on the floor of conference and in committee and accepted party working principles, such as respect for majority decision and the need for solidarity, would be at a premium.

From NSW the six representatives were pledged to the unpublicised proposals in favor of withdrawal from the war, although Rae had stipulated that concessions to the overall mood would be necessary. J. H. Catts supported the voluntary war effort subject to suitable and rational control; T. D. Mutch was of similar views and both were marked contrasts to the figures they had replaced at the last moment. A. C. Willis was a radical but strong on home defence by compulsory training.

Arthur Rae possessed complex views; of AWU background and then NSW party organiser, Rae had been press secretary of the No-Conscription Council and his vociferous radicalism had earned him support from the socialist left in the Sydney Labor Council. Described by Molesworth as drafter of the NSW conference proposals and 'a whole-hogger for the lot', he also favored compulsory training. Of the two hard-liners John Power was the most competent, a calm and effective speaker with strong pacifist and socialist convictions who also belonged to the Anti-Imperial Federation League. The other, Gavan Sutherland, was less formidable being younger and less experienced than Power, whose views he shared.

Leading the Queensland delegation and enjoying the prestige of both his return to government with an increased majority at the elections of 16 March and a recent appearance at the Governor-General's conference was the Premier, T. J. Ryan, a supporter of the voluntary campaign but having serious doubts about the prolonged nature of the war. [1] Pressure upon the Queensland delegation had been applied by the AWU in that state in favor of an early conclusion to the war and striking out of all compulsory clauses in the Defence Act, [2] and from the radical BIC which, under influence from the local Peace Alliance, had declared in May unabashedly against any further reinforcements being sent to Europe. [3] Furthermore, Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention had declared against further forms of compulsory training upon the urgings of radical unionists [4] and instructed its federal representatives accordingly. [5] Later, the state executive on a division of 8-7 declined to issue an instruction for

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- [1] D. J. Murphy, T. J. Ryan: A Political Biography Ph.D. University of Queensland, 1972. Ryan's personal undertaking on support for recruiting given to Donald Mackinnon Daily Standard 6 June, 1918 must be balanced against his doubts at the recent recruiting conference. Proceedings loc.cit. p. 136.
 - [2] Report of Delegates' Meeting, Queensland Branch, AWU, Brisbane. Daily Standard. 25 January, 1918.
 - [3] Ibid. 12 April, 20 May, 1918.
 - [4] E. H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk. pp. 211-214.
 - [5] By 38-20. Convention Minutes 2 February, 1918.

delegates to support withdrawal from further recruiting efforts and adopted a fairly flexible definition of the force of party directives, [1] which in practice led to variegated voting responses from the delegates. Apart from Ryan four other delegates were state parliamentarians and the other, Senator Myles Ferricks, was an FPLP member - all belonged to state executive. W. McCormack was the moderate Legislative Assembly speaker, Lewis McDonald the state secretary; J. A. Fihelly, Minister for Railways whose radical Irish sympathies had previously caused controversy, was subdued at Perth; C. Collins had a son at the front but favored the BIC policy. Ryan's assurance to Molesworth that he could depend upon five, possibly six votes was a little overconfident. [2]

Victoria's delegation had been, unusually, selected by a plebiscite of party members and affiliated unionists and comprised the opinion leaders in that state - Senator John Barnes, AWU, M. M. Blackburn, the idiosyncratic socialist lawyer and senior party vice-president, J. H. Scullin, party president for 1918, E. J. Holloway and C. J. Bennett from the THC and Victorian and federal ALP Secretary Arch. Stewart. [3] State conference had overwhelmingly carried opposition to compulsory training in 1917, [4] and endorsed the NSW peace policy of the same year, both decisions reaffirmed at the March, 1918 state conference, but increased fears of Japan had produced there also an isolationist declaration which was adopted with little debate.

That this conference enthusiastically reaffirms its resolutions of 1917 upon Peace and War; approves what has already been done in the work of propagating these ideas, instructs the incoming Executive to continue to

[1] Minutes Special Meeting State executive 31 May, 1918.

[2] Statement to Molesworth, Sydney 11 June 1918. Material on the Industrial Section p. 24.

[3] Review of delegates Labor Call 11 April, 1918.

[4] Official Report pp. 13-15.

extend that work and to secure the discussion of peace in the Federal Parliament. Further this Conference recommends the Federal Conference to make it a plank of the Federal Platform that Australia shall engage in no more overseas wars. [1]

Metropolitan members of state executive had later attempted to formulate a position on recruiting but the full executive voted to leave the matter in abeyance; both Scullin and Blackburn were free then to express their strong beliefs in retention of compulsory training for defence against an eastern enemy.

Of the South Australian delegates only three - Tom Grealy, Norman Makin and Stan Whitford - were able to attend at Perth, state executive in Adelaide finding the cost of sending a full delegation excessive at over 200, [2] so that the state disposed only of the three votes, all of which were pledged to support the 1917 NSW peace policy and deletion of compulsory provisions in the defence plank. [3] This delegation was lightweight however, representing the young lower-rank replacements for the lost conscriptionist leadership. Tasmania also could only afford half a delegation of Senators Long and O'Keefe with W.E. Shoobridge MHA, but had taken the precaution of appointing two Western Australians as proxies: John Curtin, editor of the Westralian Worker and ALF state secretary Alex McCallum. Tasmanian state conference decisions had supported an amended defence scheme with compulsory training and recommended adoption of the principle that no further military expeditions should be despatched overseas unless approved by referendum of the people. [4] The three native Tasmanians were

[1] Ibid. pp. 4-5.

[2] U.L.P. Council Minutes 14 March, 1918.

[3] Minutes state conference 11 September, 1917.

[4] Daily Post 10-11 May, 1917.

inoffensive moderates while the two proxies, formally bound by the Tasmanian party policies, were independent personalities of practical frame of mind unlikely to succumb to radical appeals. State executive of the host state had approved NSW 1917 peace proposals, [1] favored mild Peace Alliance appeals for a negotiated peace, [2] and was prepared to leave the recruiting question to federal conference. [3] Control of W.A. votes in terms of a bloc was precluded in any case because of the autonomous basis of delegate selection by the District Councils. Given such disparity of views then, the room for manoeuvre had perforce to be extensive.

[1] Minutes ALF state executive 6 August, 1917.

[2] Ibid. 7 January, 1918.

[3] Ibid. 8 January, 1918.

The War and recruiting plank.

From the first day of conference at the Savoy Hotel, Perth, war and recruiting issues predominated. As a basis for debate the agenda committee presented resolution 383 from South Australia, the 1917 N.S.W. policy, which Power objected was dated and desired a broader basis. When the South Australians formally moved adoption of 383 Power accordingly moved that the 1918 N.S.W. policy be added as an addendum and was supported by colleagues Willis and Rae. On a point of order raised by Catts, the issues of participation in the war and peace proposals were declared separate and outmanoeuvred, Power agreed to let a committee draft a statement on conditions of peace. Ryan was appointed chairman and, following the convention of federal representation, the remainder were Rae (N.S.W.), Blackburn (Victoria), Cameron (W.A.), Makin (S.A.) and Long (Tasmania). After overnight deliberation the committee reported back on the second day, 18 June, [1] Ryan disclosing selection of the 1917 peace policy as the basis of discussion. Willis, Power and Ferricks attempted to have this 'endorsed' rather than 'adopted' so as to be free later to introduce the 1918 N.S.W. policy but, after an adjournment, accepted assurances that they would be able to subsequently raise the matter and the report was endorsed unanimously. [2] A gesture to international labor solidarity in the form of a resolution that the party be represented on an international conference of the working class to discuss peace and war-related issues was also made. [3]

Later that day the real battle was joined when the debate on Labor's attitude to the war and recruiting was initiated. N.S.W. members distributed copies of their state conference policy and survived an attempt to have it excluded on procedural grounds, only to have conference adopt the agenda committee report specifically eliminating their proposal : it proved impossible however to ignore the radical plank in debate.

[1] Report 1918 ALP federal conference p.p. 9-10.

[2] Ibid, p.13. See appendix.

[3] Ibid, p.14.

Extraordinary precautions were specified, conference going into committee, permitting only delegate^s, Tudor from the FLP and Collier, the W.A. parliamentary leader, as non-voting guests and visitors vouched for by three delegates to be present. Such reticence was prompted both by electoral considerations and fear of official prosecutions for statements made in open debate, as had already been encountered by Sydney Labor Council and Melbourne THC speakers.[1] These reasons induced the Victorian Labor party, whose responsibility publication of the official record became, to bowdlerise the Official Report with omission of the whole day and evening debate on the war which took place on 19 June and heavy censorship of the defence plank debate on 20-21 June. Fortunately, the proofs of the later Report, comprising actual conference minutes, have survived in at least one known copy [2], and disclose the care with which the fact was carefully concealed that the federal ALP came within only two votes of declaring opposition to the war.

At the opening of debate on Wednesday 19 June the moderate position was moved by W. Roche (W.A.) comprising item 312 from the W.A. state executive:

That while participation of Australia in the war was justifiable, for the reason that it was Australia's duty to assist the Motherland, this Conference is of opinion that the war policy up to the present has been one of war frenzied jingoism which has bled Australia white and demands that any future action shall have proper regard to the peculiar conditions of Australia, as a thinly populated and debtor country.[3]

[1] A.W. 30 August, 1917.

[2] Proof, Private and Confidential and not for publication. Only for exclusive perusal of delegates of ALP conference, Perth, June 1918 p.p.12 in the Catts papers NLA, 658/1/1. Folder entitled Correspondence 1903-1921, article 96. To differentiate hereafter this will be referred to as Minutes and the pamphlet published as the Official Report as Report. Previous accounts of this episode have only used the Report.

[3] Minutes, p. 4.

Rae and Sutherland immediately countered with an amendment based upon the final conclusions of the N.S.W. state conference and representing the radical, anti-war school within the party. Rae argued that as the Allies were no longer fighting for their originally stated aims the Australian Labor party should take a principled stand as against one of mere electoral expediency - 'Conference should not consider how the political fortunes of the Labor Party were affected by any decision arrived at, but come to a decision on the position as it now presented itself'. He asked that:

We affirm that the forces making for a continuance of this war are financial and commercial greed, land hunger, militaristic ambition and a spurious public opinion manufactured and sustained by an unscrupulous press and that the serious depletion of Australia's most virile manhood through her share of the war, the neglect of her manufacturing industries and the enormous increase in her financial obligations renders any further drain upon her resources a menace to her economic and national safety; and we therefore declare 'That the policy of the Australian Labor party is opposed to any men in future leaving Australia for military service abroad.'

While this proposal did not go as far as the original IVC/NSW state executive call for withdrawal of Australian troops should offers for peace negotiations on certain specified terms by the Allies fail to eventuate, its implications were nevertheless crucial and the motion was subsequently ignored.

A further amendment was immediately foreshadowed as a compromise and succeeded in drawing the support of several delegates while others strenuously opposed both motion and amendment. Amongst the latter was Frank Tudor who protested that adoption of the N.S.W. plank would mean imposition of conscription 'in a couple of months', and argued that the party had broad responsibilities - 'When one spoke of the rank and file, it was in reference to those whom Labor represented'. As FPLP leader he warned that by espousing such a policy Labor would be reduced to 'about five seats in the House of Representatives ... Let them face the question fairly and squarely and set to work on a platform upon which the next federal elections should be fought'. [1] Apart from the four N.S.W. radicals the Rae amendment won the support of delegates such as Collins

[1] Ibid p. 6.

and Ferricks (Queensland) and Cameron and Callanan (W.A.) in a wide-ranging debate lasting until late afternoon when a straight vote on the amendment was finally defeated 15-13. An exact breakdown of this result is impossible, conference reaffirming at this stage an earlier decision not to record divisions, but the narrow margin of only two votes is remarkable. After allowing for P. O'Loughlan (W.A.) in the chair, it appears that three other delegates abstained out of the total 32 accredited representatives, some because they desired to await one of the several amendments foreshadowed. Nearly all state delegations appeared split on the matter but it is clear that the critical factor in tipping the balance had been the success of the moderates at N.S.W. state conference in substituting Catts and Mutch for two of the original radical delegation. The stage of disillusionment with the war and continued Australian participation in it revealed by the closeness of this vote was clearly more advanced than has previously been recognised. [1]

After the dinner adjournment W.D. Johnson moved his foreshadowed compromise proposal which had already impressed some delegates. Johnson had argued cunningly;

He was in favor of no more men leaving Australia, but he wanted to have the position clear on that point. What was in his mind was that there should be no further participation in the war or recruiting except upon an authoritative statement from the Allies asserting readiness to enter upon peace negotiations on a no annexations and no penal indemnities basis; that Australia's requirements in man-power be ascertained with respect to home defence and essential industries (including shipbuilding), after an enquiry upon which the Australian Labor Party would be adequately and officially represented. With a determination of that sort arrived at he would submit for a referendum of branches and affiliated unions, and it should become null and void unless a majority of the membership voting declared in the affirmative. His aim and object was to prevent differences of opinion in the future. [2]

[1] Cf. Scott, Australia During the War, pp. 465-9; Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics pp. 176-8; Robson, The First AIF, p. 179.

[2] Minutes, p. 4.

This was a radical enough departure from the jingoistic approach of the 'bald-headed bitter-enders' to undercut the appeal of the extremists to those more moderate elements while also being acceptable to the federal political leaders with an anxious eye upon Labor's electoral appeal. Furthermore the unprecedented device of an intra-party plebiscite upon a recommendation of federal policy presented a mechanism for reconciling the widely differing approaches of the state parties which, in view of the traditional respect for rank and file determinations in Labor party thinking, would be hard for partisans on either end of the spectrum to reject. Blackburn (Victoria), O'Keefe (Tasmania) and Baglin (W.A.) had pronounced themselves in favor of such compromise before the vote on the N.S.W. proposal, at least one of whom was regarded by the radicals hopefully as sympathetic, [1] and another indicated a switch of support from his first preference - the N.S.W. proposal - to the compromise suggested. [2]

Authorship of this compromise and responsibility for its shrewd insertion must be attributed to J.H. Catts. Johnson was by no means an inconsequential figure in the Western Australian party, [3] but was plainly an unlikely leading operator at federal level. His amendment followed almost exactly Catts' policy successfully urged upon the federal caucus early in 1918, the only new feature being the call for a plebiscite. Both Catts and Johnson were members of the agenda committee and use of an amenable figure-head by the former obviated the danger of too obviously flouting the expressed will of N.S.W. state conference - it had all the

[1] Maurice Blackburn. D. Cameron - R.S. Ross 24 June, 1918. Ross papers NLA JAF 56/1/40.

[2] F.A. Baglin Minutes, p. 6.

[3] A prominent eastern goldfields unionist, he had been a senior minister in Daglish and Scaddan Labor governments, led the PLP briefly in 1905 and again from September-October 1916. Having narrowly lost his seat of Guildford to National Labor in the post-split elections of September, 1917, Johnson remained on the state executive in 1918 and was appointed full time organiser in the rehabilitation of the party. G.C. Bolton and A. Mozley, The Western Australian Legislature 1870-1930. Canberra, 1961, pp.96-7.

hallmarks of Catts' modus operandi.[1] In seconding Johnson's motion on these lines, Catts now commended it as 'enunciating general principles' and supported the call for reference of the issue to another committee for drafting of a recommendation. Accordingly twelve members were elected with Ryan again the chairman and of whom only Ferricks, Rae and Cameron could be characterised as radicals.[2] The next day, 20 June, after working all morning the committee brought down a report setting out Labor's 'Attitude to the War and Recruiting'. Once again it was quite obvious who had been the principle framer of the report : the attitude on the war was a near exact transcription of Catts' statement of Labor policy made on his own initiative in the House of Representatives during January [3] while the attitude on recruiting followed his suggestions to caucus preceding that parliamentary speech,[4] once again the only addition being the proposal for a party plebiscite of approval. Catts himself undoubtedly needed the assistance of Ryan, whose prestige in the movement generally and ability at manipulating the pressures for consensus and deference to federal political authority were invaluable, but acceptance of these principles was a particular personal triumph for the FPLP secretary.

Radical dissent was immediately voiced, Power criticising the committee for lack of backbone in not formulating a more positive policy, and Ferricks the weakness and indefiniteness of the proposals. During consideration of the report seriatim, the N.S.W. radicals moved several amendments aimed at strengthening the attitude on the war but met little success. On the recruiting plank a short struggle led to deletion of reference to 'official' participation as being dependent upon fulfillment

[1] His facility at presenting just the right compromise is apparent from FPLP minutes of this period and distinguished Catts to his colleagues. Interview by the author with N.J.O. Makin, Adelaide 27 November, 1973.

[2] Bennett and Blackburn - (Victoria), Catts and Rae - (N.S.W.), Ryan and Ferricks - (Queensland), Grealy and Makin - (S.A.), Johnson and Cameron - (W.A.), O'Keefe and Shoobridge - (Tasmania). Minutes p. 6.

[3] CPD LXXXVIII 15 January, p.2957, See above.

[4] Ibid; FPLP 3 January 1918.

of certain conditions so as to make the proposal binding upon all members of the party in their private and public capacities. The last rally of the radicals however took place during the overnight adjournment ; at the start of proceedings on Friday 21 June, Ferricks and Cameron made an effort to retrieve the hard line position on further participation in the war effort, moving adoption of the following clause as principal component of the attitude to recruiting.

That a clear and authoritative statement be made on behalf of the Allies asserting their readiness to enter into peace negotiations by an immediate armistice for the purpose of discussion and negotiation with the aim of ending the war upon the basis of no annexations and no penal indemnities, and failing such armistice proposal by the Allies, no more men should leave Australia for military service overseas.[1]

This was obviously the crux of the issue, the committee having avoided binding support for the war effort by Labor to such extreme stipulations. Ryan countered, defending the original recommendation as being the consensus viewpoint of the contrasting attitudes in the committee and invoked the principle of solidarity, two others supporting him and Holloway raising the threat of Japan as reason for supporting the amendment. Ferrick's amendment was defeated and the clause adopted with minor amendments.

After conceding so much ground the radicals' last chance lay in gaining deletion of the provision for appeal by plebiscite to the rank and file, granted as a concession to Western Australian, South Australian and Tasmanian doubts.[2] In this also they were unsuccessful and an attempt by Power to have the N.S.W. proposals submitted at the same time for rank and file consideration was firmly ruled out by the chairman. It was obvious that some hard line delegates were still unhappy at this compromise - Power protested 'I would sooner have nothing than this', but Willis put the view of several other militants by warning that unless the conference produced some policy the N.S.W. branch could split up.

[1] Ibid, p. 7. Emphasis added to the additions by Ferricks to the committee recommendation.

[2] J.H. Catts, The Standpoint of Australian Labor on the War and Recruiting, Catts papers NLA 658/1/D.

Mr. Willis recognised that it camouflaged the whole position in a way, but he considered it of paramount importance to keep the Movement intact, and whilst dissatisfied with the result, he was prepared to accept it in the spirit of solidarity for Labor.[1]

The policy, as amended, was then adopted by 30-2.[2]

Attitude to the War

1. The attitude of Labor towards the publicity declared objects of the War is what it was at the outbreak of the War :
 - (a) For Liberty and Democracy and the Independence of Small Nations.
 - (b) For the Honoring of Publicly Made Treaties.
 - (c) For the Maintenance of Public International Law.
2. The aims of Labor in participating in the War purposed:
 - (a) Assistance to Great Britain under the voluntary system, in maintaining the publicly declared objects for which she entered the War (as described in the first paragraphs, and those only) to the best of our capability, consistent with Australia's paramount and essential needs.
 - (b) Bringing about an enduring World Peace, on terms of equity and justice to all mankind.

Attitude to Recruiting

Further participation in recruiting shall be subject to the following conditions:

- (a) That a clear and authoritative statement be made on behalf of the Allies, asserting their readiness to enter into Peace negotiations, upon the basis of no annexations and no penal indemnities.

[1] Minutes p.7 Sutherland, Callanan and Cameron also indicated that they would bow to the inevitable pp. 7-8.

[2] Catts, The Standpoint of Australian Labor p.6. The two dissenters were probably Power and Collins.

(b) That Australia's requirements in manpower be ascertained and met with respect to -

- (1) Home Defence.
- (2) Industrial Requirements.

An Immediate enquiry, upon which the Australian Labor Party shall be adequately and officially represented, shall be held, and its decisions immediately given effect to.

Provided that this determination shall be immediately submitted by each State Executive - with recommendation from this Conference for its adoption - to a referendum of members of all branches and affiliated organisations, and shall become operative upon a majority of the votes of those voting being cast in the affirmative. The ballot to close not later than November 1, 1918. Should the Commonwealth Government interfere with the taking of the ballot on the proposals re the War and Recruiting, the whole scheme shall become operative immediately.[1]

The defence plank.

With this disposed of the one outstanding issue for resolution was the Labor defence plank, upon which instructions from state party organisations were once again varied : Queensland, Victoria and South Australia were opposed to retention of compulsory military training altogether, N.S.W. and Tasmania favoured an amended scheme whilst Western Australia did not have a collective preference. Once again the necessity for accommodation of differences would be essential and this explained the complicated set of alternative proposals culled by the agenda committee from the business paper to permit the full play of views. Once again the bete jaune of Japan loomed large over the conference and this time exercised its most profound influence. Catts had been greatly concerned that the opposition to conscription would spill over into hostility towards compulsory military training itself as established in the platform in 1908 and that ALP defence policy would thereupon become inadequate in view of the Japanese threat. His own convictions persuaded him that if the public was apprised of the strategic situation, a more responsible attitude would result.

[1] Minutes, p. 8.

The Government absolutely refuses to give the public any information - I am not allowed to give it even to Parliament, or outside this House. Under the circumstances, the Government may find great Labor conferences meeting presently because of administration of defence matters recently, and doing things which should not be done at this time above all others ... If the public were allowed to know the facts they would adopt no such attitude, but because they are not, and because those of us who have made a study of the question are not allowed to put the facts before them, men, in their ignorance, may do something which will be very much to the detriment of this country, if it does not lead to disaster.[1]

As can now be established the highest levels in the government and services were in fact in accord with Catts' sense of great and imminent danger, being currently preoccupied by a scare over Japan. The Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Griffith, made an official report on manpower requirements for the AIF upon the basis of government files and senior military advice in March, and adverted to the supplementary needs of home defence as 'a matter of grave urgency'.[2] Munro-Ferguson had referred to this report in his opening speech at the recruiting conference and speculated on the need for better home forces; [3] soon after Senator Pearce announced that instead of abandoning the compulsory military training system which had been suspended since 1914, the government intended to reactivate it 'because we cannot see what is going to come out of this war. There is the possibility that we may yet have to fight in this country, and we ought to have a force here able to deal with all contingencies'.[4] Amalgamation of skeleton units and a call of men from 21-50 years unfit for overseas service to take part in resumed training followed,[5] as part of what the Adjutant-General Brigadier-General Sellheim explained as an effort to bring home-defence units up to war strength.[6] Simultaneously a recommendation was accepted from Chief of the General Staff, Major-General J.G. Legge, to raise immediately an air service for the defence of Australia as the most appropriate and inexpensive means of blunting an enemy attack, creation of which

[1] CPD LXXXIV 25 April, 1918 p.4194.

[2] Report of Sir Samuel Griffith CPP Session 1917-18-19 Vol. 4.p.4.

[3] Proceedings of Governor-General's conference on recruiting, loc.cit.

[4] CPD LXXXIV 18 April, 1918 p.4061.

[5] Age 20, 23, 30 April, 1918.

[6] Ibid 1 May, 1918.

'should not be delayed a day when we realise that they may be needed tomorrow'. [1] Steadfast refusal by the government to provide a more detailed rationale for the drastic steps regarding the militia did little to allay the fears of Labor parliamentarians. [2]

Frustrated in public exposition of the danger, Catts was determined to dispel this ignorance within the confines of the federal conference as had been done in the councils of the N.S.W. Party, unofficially circulating material compiled on the Japanese threat suppressed by the Australian censor, including extracts from writings by the Japanese imperialist Kayahara Kwazan concerning Australia. [3] A Labor delegate, Norman Makin, who was particularly impressed by such information referred particularly to Catts as its originator, [4] but the latter was supported no less emphatically by certain state colleagues. Another delegate reported

that during the discussion on the question of Defence, the attitude of Japan towards Australia was strongly emphasised by several of the Eastern States delegates, who detailed many instances of how Japan had repeatedly demanded for her subjects free entry into Australia. So impressed were many of the delegates with the statements which were made in connection with this matter that they freely expressed the opinion that not another man could leave Australia's shore and that immediate and effective steps should be taken for a more adequate defence of Australia against a probable invasion by Japan. [5]

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- [1] Memorandum dated 29 April 1918 quoted by D. Gillison, Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942. Canberra 1962 pp. 1-5; Sissons' invaluable study Australia's Attitudes to Japan and Defence loc cit clearly charts this trend.
 - [2] CPD LXXXIV 19 April, p.4095; 20 April p.4129; 1 May pp. 4249-50; 4300-1.
 - [3] Sissons records the use of this writer shortly after by a Labor speaker in the South Australian parliament, S.A.P.D. (Assembly) 31 July, 1918 pp. 51-2, and also the references to use of such material by then Director of Military Intelligence E.L. Piesse in talks with Japanese diplomats. Alton-Curzon 23 January 1920 No. 33 (F67/67/23). Enclosure 2 in no. 695. Documents in British Foreign Policy, 1917-1939. First Series Vol. 6 pp. 953-66.
 - [4] Report of federal conference delegates, Minutes adjourned ULP Council 18 July 1918. W.W. 28 June, 1918.
 - [5] Don Cameron. Report to officers and delegates, Metropolitan District Council, ALF 31 June, 1918 adopted Minutes Metropolitan D.C. 23 July 1918. The same report, enclosed in a letter to Bob Ross in Melbourne was intercepted by military intelligence. Pearce papers NLA B8 MS 213, Series 10.

Continuing straight on from the debate on the war and recruiting, the Victorian delegates moved according to their instructions that the party adopt as its defence plank removal of compulsory military training from the Defence Act. In an interesting juxtaposition, the N.S.W. radicals Power and Sutherland came out against this immediately, but Queensland and South Australian spokesmen complied with their instructions by supporting it. The first break came when Maurice Blackburn, admitting that he would vote as directed, resurrected the old arguments; affirming 'that there would be an army in Australia whether Labor wanted it or not', and that it would be better and more democratic therefore to retain a citizens' army of compulsory trainees subject to certain safeguards to their and the nation's civil rights. Catts took a more prominent part in this debate:

There was every reason why Australia should be prepared to defend herself, and for the Conference to affirm that compulsory training should be abolished altogether would mean that Labor would have no representatives in Parliament at all ... In 1908, at the Brisbane Conference, he had been against training by compulsion, but since then the irresistible logic of facts had compelled him to advocate the principle in its application to home defence. [1]

Tudor also claimed to have changed his views since his opposition to adoption of the existing Labor defence plank : 'he had to confess that his experience during the last ten years was such as to alter his views on it.' Sixteen speakers opposed abolition of compulsory training, including the whole N.S.W. and Tasmania delegations. Only the Victorians remained solid in favor of their motion, and of their number no less than four stated that they did so out of party loyalty but would have preferred to have voted against their instructions. [2]

[1] Minutes p. 8. Catts, O'Keefe and Shoobridge left conference that afternoon for the east but were permitted to record votes against the Victorian proposal.

[2] Holloway and Arch. Stewart remained loyal ; Bennett, Blackburn, Barnes and Scullin stated that their personal views favored retention of compulsion. Ibid pp. 8-9. Blackburn and Scullin were particular disappointments to the radicals during the conference generally. Cameron-Ross 24 June, 1918. R.S. Ross papers NLA JAF 56/1/40. See Blackburn's explanation of his own attitude, Labor Call 8 May 1919. The whole issue blew up again at the Victorian state conference, 1919. Ibid. 22, 29 May, 1919.

All the other delegations split over the proposal in following debate in which 10 of 28 speakers referred directly or indirectly to the Japanese threat. Victorians Scullin and Barnes and Queenslanders McCormack and Fihelly in particular alluded to Japan in justifying their decisions to break with instructions and the effect of that issue can be gauged when the seconder of the motion, Bennett, admitted that, 'had the 1917 Victorian State Conference been in possession of what Conference had learned, different instructions would have been given regarding the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act'. McCormack was satisfied on his part that 'had information which had been put before them that day been available at the last Labor-in-Politics Convention of Queensland Labor Party ... a different direction would have been given to Queensland delegates on this question'. [1] References to Japan were far more explicit than the publicly released Report discloses, particularly the speeches by Scullin, Barnes, Mutch and Fihelly which combined in varying degrees fears of commercial penetration by Japan, a challenge to the White Australia policy or outright invasion.

Scullin. Delegates knew what had been happening since the war broke out in relation to a nation which had been garrisoning ports, controlling dockyards and arsenals, acquiring mines and building ships - emerging practically from bankruptcy, now to national opulence and able to lend both munitions and money to the Allies ... Australians should know that this menace was there. The statements which Mr. Hughes had made, as to pressure being put on Australia, were correct; but, knowing that, the Prime Minister should have assisted to keep men in Australia, instead of leading a conscription campaign to force citizens of the Commonwealth to fight far from home overseas. [2]

Mutch ... believed that a White Australia was definitely threatened now. If there were going to be trouble with Japan, that trouble would arise by reason of her planting her commerce here ... Japan was seeking a commercial conquest of Australia, and was not likely to give up that without something being done to satisfy her either in that or other directions. [3]

Fihelly. Australia's battlefront was not in the North Sea, or in Flanders : it was here ... Australia was far from Europe and the white races and had to be prepared to do her best. [4]

[1] Minutes, p.9.

[2] Ibid, p. 8.

[3] Ibid, p. 9.

[4] Ibid.

Unsurprisingly then, the Victorian proposal was knocked down by 18-9, at least several of the initial supporters crossing sides for the vote.[1] Instead it was decided to retain compulsory training in the revised defence plank, modifying its application to only those between 21-25 years and also keeping the provision for mass mobilisation within Australia in time of war. Having made this fundamental choice the rest came easier, conference deciding next day, Saturday 22 June, to refer the matter of detail reforms to yet another committee, comprising Ryan (Queensland), Rae (N.S.W.), Blackburn (Victoria), Grealy (S.A.), Cameron (W.A.) and Barnes (Victoria), 'to make the recommendations it may deem necessary to democratise the Defence Act to safeguard civil liberty, rights of conscience and of industrial organisation'.[2] On Sunday afternoon this committee reported back with a long list of matters representing advanced party thinking on the administration of defence, which were adopted with minor changes. Most notable deletion was of a clause proclaiming 'No man to be compelled to serve outside the Australian Commonwealth', objected to by Collins, Holloway and Curtin, despite Blackburn's assurance that it included Australian territories within the Commonwealth, and the clause failed to gain a two-thirds majority for inclusion. Labor's defence plank now became a massive component of the federal platform, replacing the brief two lines aproved almost exactly one decade ago.

A.L.P. Defence plank, June, 1918

Amendment of the Defence Act to secure:

- (a) No military training for persons not entitled to vote.
- (b) Compulsory training between earliest voting age and four years afterwards. Employees to be trained in employers' time, and without deduction of wages; payment of standard wages for time spent in camp.
- (c) Obligation of training to be enforced in civil courts only.

[1] Inexplicably Ryan himself was not present during the debate, saving him embarrassment later when McCormack and Fihelly narrowly escaped censure for disregard of instructions. Queensland state executive minutes 12 October, 1918.

[2] Minutes, p.9.

- (d) Proceedings of courts-martial to be public, with right of appeal to civil court.
- (e) No penalties to be imposed except in pursuance of explicit enactments of Commonwealth Parliament.
- (f) Intended regulations to be publicly advertised, and regulations to have no effect at all till before both Houses, either of which may veto.
- (g) Limitation of professional soldiers to necessary instruction and administrative and working staff.
- (h) Abolition of military oaths.
- (i) Abolition of distinction between commissioned and non-commissioned officers.
- (j) Recognition of principle of election of qualified candidates as officers.
- (k) Salute and other useless discipline to be abolished.
- (l) No employment of or interference by soldiers in industrial disputes. Punishment of Ministers and other persons responsible for breach of this provision.
- (m) Citizens, on completion of training, to retain arms delivered to them during training.
- (n) Persons under voting age not to be called up in time of war.
- (o) Proclamation of compulsory service to contain an express declaration of the immediate peril of Australia, and to be laid within 14 days before both Houses, either of which may disallow the calling up.
- (p) Defence Acts to require annual renewal, as in England.
- (q) No raising of forces for service outside the Commonwealth, or participation, or promise of participation, in any future overseas war, except by decision of the people by Initiative and Referendum.
- (r) No conscientious objectors to be put to any kind of combatant training or service.

One other matter concerning the war was settled on the last day, Monday 24th June, with conference expressing 'its earnest hope that, in negotiating for peace, Britain will not be delayed or embarrassed by the statement that Australia insists on the retention of the captured Pacific possessions'. [1] Prima facie praiseworthy in its selflessness, this resolution was approved after deletion of an accompanying clause supplying the rationale: 'On grounds of international morality and national necessity the people of this vast Commonwealth cannot subscribe to the doctrine that conquest creates rights of annexation'. Blackburn's 'vital national reasons' why Australia could not admit this principle amounted in effect to the hope that Japan's territorial advance might not even now be legitimised. [2] It was an appropriate final reminder of the presence which had fearfully overhung each of the significant debates at Perth.

'Labor united means Labor triumphant': the bid for party unity, 1918.

As agreed on by federal conference it then became necessary to sell the recruiting resolution to an estimated three-quarter million party and affiliated union members throughout Australia. [3] Neither war nor recruiting proposals were divulged until after the close of conference on 24 June, when they elicited predictably mixed reactions in

[1] Ibid. p.11.

[2] Alluding to the Government's war aims later, Catts also employed similar arguments; 'If the doctrine of force is to be enthroned, where does Australia come in. For if we declare that the strength to annex territory shall form the title to territory, then Heaven save us, for our own title deeds may be challenged on the same principle much earlier than is good for our health'. J.H.Catts, The Standpoint of Australian Labor on the War and Recruiting. July ? 1918. Catts papers NLA 658/1/Typ.D. 1918. p.5.

[3] Press release n.d. ALF state executive correspondence. File 69, Interstate Congress Perth 1918.

the labor press, some feeling that conference had gone too far [1] and others that it had not gone far enough. [2] The ballot was drafted by a committee appointed by conference [3] and sought to elicit a Yes/No response to the conditions laid down for further participation in the recruiting campaign. After one false start, in which both the attitudes on the war and recruiting were included for verification upon the paper, necessitating publication of a new ballot, [4] the question was submitted together with conference's recommendation for an affirmative answer and the reply of the movement in the six states was awaited.

Chief architect of the policy, Jimmy Catts, lost little time in defending it in a manifesto explaining the Perth decisions, widely reproduced in the Labor press. 'Since we entered the bloody scrimmage under the captaincy of our senior partner in the British Empire Unlimited, have the rules and regulations been changed, and that without consulting us? ... We are in honest doubt?' Hughes' bellicose utterances concerning economic and territorial war aims, Catts said, Labor found both unworthy and dangerous, demanding to know how much Britain concurred in them and reserving Australia's right to base its estimate of the level of her contribution upon industrial needs and domestic defence criteria.

That policy places Australia first ... Unfortunately the War Precautions Act prohibits plain speaking or the publication of facts of urgent importance to the public interest. Labor demands to know all and to then test the knowledge by untrammelled investigation ... Let us unite to accept en masse the determination of the Perth Conference. It had facts before it which we are not allowed to repeat to the public ... Labor united means Labor triumphant. [5]

[1] Daily Post 26 June, 1918.

[2] Daily Standard 26 June, 1918.

[3] Report 1918 federal conference p. 50. It comprised P. O'Loughlen (W.A.), Arthur Rae (NSW) and the Victorians Arch Stewart and M. Blackburn but in practice O'Loughlen was ignored and it appears that responsibility was taken by Victoria, Stewart being the federal secretary. Minutes ALF state executive 28 October, 1918.

[4] Ibid. 5 August, 1918; Queensland Central Political Executive Minutes 1 August, 1918.

[5] The Standpoint of Australian Labor on the War and Recruiting, pp. 6-7.

Some state Labor parties responded readily: in Brisbane the state executive resolved to ask the Labor newspapers for support, strongly urged as high an affirmative vote as possible and accepted the assistance of the local Peace Alliance to secure that result. [1] The Tasmanian party organisation began conducting its poll with the support of the Labor newspaper, [2] and likewise in the west the ALF fell in with the scheme [3] In Melbourne the Victorian executive endorsed the policy on 6 September and commended it to the members, [4] Followed by the Trades Hall Council. [5]

Within a short time the sheer effort involved in such an unprecedented enterprise had become apparent, with complaints that the task of conducting a vote necessitated full-time organisation arising from some quarters, [6] and the fear was also expressed of provoking a backlash within the party. Eventually the Western Australians began to wire other parties requesting convening of the federal executive immediately to decide on future action. [7] The South Australian party was able to consider the Perth proposals at its state conference in early September and endorsed the attitude on recruiting; however on the advice of its PLP leaders and over federal delegate Makin's protest it decided not to implement the ballot and simply reaffirm its 1917 decision to leave recruiting up to the individual.

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- [1] Queensland CPE Minutes 1 August, 1918.
 - [2] Minutes Tasmanian state executive 14 August, 1918. World 21 September, 1918.
 - [3] Minutes ALF state executive 5 August, 2 September, 1918.
 - [4] Argus 7 September, 1918.
 - [5] Minutes Melbourne THC 26 September, 1918.
 - [6] Secretary, Metropolitan District Council, ALF - General Secretary, state executive 27 August, 1918. ALF state executive correspondence, 1918.
 - [7] Minutes ALF state executive 7 October, 1918.

AWU boss Frank Lundie objected to the very form of the ballot and feared that the rank and file would reject it, while conference chairman Lionel Hill MLA assured delegates that compliance with the direction was not mandatory and received almost unanimous endorsement. [1]

However greatest adverse reaction arose in New South Wales, source of the most radical initiatives on the war of all the Labor parties, stemming from state and federal parliamentarians opposed to the federal conference recommendations. Senator Gardiner had agreed there to cooperate in a renewed volunteer recruiting campaign with state authorities and began low-key platform appearances urging eligibles to search their consciences. [2] He was emulated by PLP leader and deputy-leader John Storey and James Dooley, [3] while Con Wallace, federal member for Hughes' vacated seat of West Sydney, suited the action to the word by himself enlisting at the end of the month. [4] Other NSW federal parliamentarians were prepared to go even further, despite a request by state executive for all members of parliament to refrain from further recruiting activity until the plebiscite had been taken. [5] On 2 September a confidential manifesto was circulated within the NSW party signed by a majority of federal members opposing the state executive's advocacy of a Yes vote. These parliamentarians argued that at every election and referendum campaign since 1914 they had firmly supported the voluntary system, individually and as a body. They claimed approval of the Perth policy would tempt introduction of conscription by legislation and would be tantamount to abandonment of the men in the trenches:

[1] Minutes ULP state conference 13 September, 1918.

[2] Daily Telegraph, 1 August, 1918.

[3] Sun, 7 August, 1918.

[4] Daily Telegraph, 28 August, 1918.

[5] Ibid. 4 September, 1918; Jauncey, Conscription in Australia. p.336.

a distinct breach of faith with the electors and a base desertion of our soldiers. Such a step would be disastrous to the movement at a time when all should aim at solidarity and closing up our ranks to make a united effort to secure the reins of government in the Federal and State Parliaments, in order to protect the interests of the people in the very serious industrial and financial problems which will arise out of the war. [1]

Basically the disagreement came down to a question of authority in the ALP, federal members refusing to be bound by recommendation of the federal conference or state executive and positing a higher responsibility to the electorate at large.

The policy of the movement is that the platform and pledges given to electors shall be adhered to at this critical juncture in order to protect the best interests of Labor, and we earnestly ask you to vote No.

This appeal was signed by the three Senators and six members: Senators Gardiner, McDougall and Grant; Messrs. M. Charlton, S.R. Nicholls, Edward Riley, Con. Wallace, Dave Watkins and J.E. West. Only three NSW FLP members abstained - Catts, who repudiated it, [2]/ Arthur Blakeley and Mick Considine. W.G. Mahony was out of town at the time but was also reported to have been active advising league branches against endorsement of the plank, so can be counted amongst the dissidents. [3] Given the denial in 1916 by federal executive of any state party's ability to direct FLP members and Tudor's insistence in Perth on a free vote on the matter there was little the NSW executive could do when caucus members remained adamant, except to issue a statement through P.C. Evans acknowledging the right of those individuals to state their views but regretting publication of the manifesto because of the difficulties of reply by the other side imposed by a strict

[1] Age 3 September, 1918.

[2] Daily Telegraph 4 September, 1918.

[3] Argus 30 September, 1918.

censorship. Well might Catts lament inability to use his best arguments:

... neither orally nor in writing, publicly nor privately, may one freely discuss the main basic facts upon which the Perth conference adopted the war and recruiting resolutions with only two dissentients. And those dissentients objected only to the moderation of the Perth conference resolutions. [1]

The NSW group struck responsive chords in other FPLP members. Finlayson, MHR for Brisbane, supported the claim of fidelity to the ALP 1917 federal election platform promising support for the war and voluntary reinforcements, [2] and claimed that several Victorian colleagues were prepared to support recruiting regardless of the ballot result. [3] Furthermore he was quoted to the effect that the NSW attitude represented '90%' of the members of federal caucus and that even federal conference decisions could not abrogate election promises under any circumstances. [4] Finlayson was supported by Senator Long and Victorians Fenton and McGrath, [5] thus making at least 14 declared opponents of federal policy out of 34 FPLP members. Tudor's position as caucus leader was difficult; having opposed radical suggestions in Perth and looking with disfavor even upon the final compromise, he was now faced with what was being enthusiastically heralded as an impending split by the non-Labor press and was reduced to making soothing statements. [6] When caucus met in Melbourne on 17 - 18 September it upheld the right of members to stand by their electoral undertakings and vouchsafed them a free hand. [7] Finlayson's claim would seem to be borne out

[1] Daily Telegraph 4 September, 1918; CPD LXXXV 25 September, 1918. p. 6378.

[2] Queensland Worker 5, 19, 26 September, 1918.

[3] World 4 September, 1918.

[4] Argus, 4 September, 1918.

[5] World, 4 September; Argus 7 September, 1918.

[6] Ibid. 5 September, 1918. [7] Ibid. 19 September, 1918; FPLP. 17-18 September, 1918.

concerning the majority view by Senator O'Loughlin's report to his own state that ...'after he had explained to the Federal Caucus the attitude of the (S.A.) annual conference on the recruiting ballot nearly all the members agreed that a commonsense step had been taken'.[1]

In Sydney the manifesto encouraged those otherwise vulnerable to state executive suasion to adopt a correspondingly bold attitude. While the PLP took no action as a group it was reported that all but a half dozen or so members exploited the terms of the plebiscite allowing campaigning on both sides to actively urge their respective branches to reject the recruiting policy, following the example of Storey himself in his Balmain electorate.[2] State executive countered with another circular not challenging the constitutional rights of FLP members to differ but arguing that pledges made on the hustings four years previously were irrelevant to the current situation. It rather ingeniously maintained that the Labor policy did not imply hostility to voluntarism - which was regarded as moribund in any case, having been largely replaced with economic conscription of employees - and defended the strength of objections to a continued maximum effort : the need for ascertainment of manpower required to defend against 'any stray international burglar who might visit out shores if every able-bodied man was sent abroad', and to keep the wheels of industrial production turning for domestic demand,'with a little bit over for the soldiers belonging to the Motherland and her friends in Europe'.[3]. Executive also publicised an undertaking extracted from several N.S.W. dissidents to abide by whatever result emerged from the plebiscite.[4]

[1] Minutes ULP Council 10 October, 1918.

[2] Sun 19, 25 September, 1918.

[3] The Labor Referendum on Recruiting n.d. Typescript insert, Material concerning the Industrial Section, Molesworth papers ML. 243/3/J.

[4] Minutes ALF state executive 28 October, 1918.

It was obvious that the plebiscite, after serving as an inducement to compromise in Perth, had become an acute embarrassment to the ALP, to be down-played as much as possible. On 2 September the Director of War Propaganda weighed in with an 'Open Letter to the Voters in the Recruiting Referendum of the ALP', questioning the assumptions behind the Perth policy. D.K. Picken, the Director, claimed this as a purely personal gesture devoid of any Government instigation but utilised the extensive facilities at his disposal to achieve widespread mailing and press coverage.[1] Whether affected by this or not, sufficient N.S.W. union executives returned plebiscite material unopened to Labor head office to alarm state executive into warning that non-cooperation was both unconstitutional and reducing the plebiscite to a farce.[2] Partly due to this abstention by opponents and to a decision by the Sydney Labor Council to urge an affirmative vote, after favoring abandonment under the excuse of Pincken's interference constituting Government intervention in the ballot, and an automatic implementation of the policy [3], the return of papers filled out revealed an easy majority for Yes.[4] Supporters like Catts were also able to mobilise support from several electorate councils,[5] but feelings within the party remained agitated.[6]

Interstate the same experience resulted, with the Tasmanians suspending their ballot after seven weeks due to what it called 'changed circumstances', [7] thereby joining South Australia in refusal to comply with the federal request. Even the authors of the Perth compromise attempted, not altogether satisfactorily, to minimise its implication,

[1] Sun, 26 September, 1918.

[2] Daily Telegraph, 4 October, 1918.

[3] Minutes Executive meeting Sydney Labor Council, 17 September; General meetings 19 September, 3 and 15 October, 1918.

[4] Daily Telegraph 20, 26 September, 1918.

[5] Ibid 12 October, 1918.

[6] Even on formal occasions such as the Lithgow Eight Hours Day banquet, where public disagreement erupted. Ibid 14 October, 1918.

[7] Minutes Tasmanian state executive, 9 October, 1918.

Ryan explaining that it sought only to emphasise a basis for negotiations, and if carried would merely restrict official Labor participation in raising troops but not the right of any member of the movement to enlist. [1] Catts made the same distinction and stressed that no unilateral pull-out was contemplated, nor an opposition to financing and resupply of the AIF. [2] The situation had so deteriorated that the federal executive meeting urged by W.A. since early October was finally set for 6 November, with the alternatives being adherence to the plebiscite result, declaration of its adoption regardless or abandonment altogether. Providentially, in view of the apparent collapse of the Central Powers in Europe and optimistic reports of an early armistice, the executive was enabled to hail the approaching peace, congratulate itself upon the similarities between Labor's peace plank and President Wilson's 14 Points and gratefully declare that, in view of the situation, perseverance with the ballot was unnecessary, although a manpower investigation in anticipation of demobilisation problems remained desirable. [3] As a matter of principle however the two defaulting parties were castigated.

It was pointed out very forcibly to the representatives of these states that such action would mean the overthrow of federal authority, and if each state was to decide for itself questions of Commonwealth policy, the Party could not exist as a national organisation; eventually it was resolved that both states be informed that their action was a breach of authority of the interstate conference, and they be called upon to submit a full explanation of their action to the interstate conference in June next. [4]

[1] QPD CXX 4 September, 1918 pp. 2011-2014.

[2] CPD LXXXV 25 September, 1918, pp. 6374-6384.

[3] Labor News 16 November, 1918.

[4] Report federal executive delegates 16 December, 1918. ALP state executive correspondence, file 85. Reports : General.

Such a directive was perfectly reasonable given Labor structure and traditions but was rather irrelevant where federal conference itself had been too timid to make a firm decision and had excused itself by reference to the susceptibilities of the smaller states.[1]

While events had thus rescued the ALP from its dilemma, significant returns from the plebiscite were already at hand and known to be in the affirmative. Federal returning officer, E.J. Holloway, was able to report later that of the four branches participating, all had given a gratifying approval of federal recruiting policy ; Queensland by the widest margin of 3:1, Victoria and N.S.W. by 2:1 majorities each and Western Australia by 'an affirmative majority'.[2] While these proportions should be treated with suspicion, for the reasons suggested in connection with N.S.W. above, and because exact figures cannot be found to give an indication of the representativeness of this result, there can be no doubting the prevalence of a genuine rank and file antipathy to further recruitment in 1918, stemming from causes ranging from simple war-weariness through disaffection with the aims of participation, to practical demands for conservation of forces to face a more immediately threatening potential enemy. All these underlay the powerful call at Perth for Australian withdrawal from support for the war, which the radicals merely served to focus. The plebiscite episode in the ALP comprised a bizarre finale to the world war, being singular indeed for even a party in political opposition to poll its members on participation in a current conflict and a unique tactic in Labor politics difficult to envisage under any other circumstances. Had the war continued, developments can only be speculated upon but as the conditions stipulated for continued support of recruiting were unlikely to be met by the Government, the radicals would undoubtedly have pressed for a rigorous attitude.

[1] Nevertheless the federal executive did later rule 'That all Congress (i.e. federal conference) decisions are binding on all States under all circumstances'. Report federal executive delegates Minutes ALF state executive, 2 July, 1919.

[2] Federal executive report, Report ALP federal conference, 1919, p.13.

Expectations of a split over this at the time were unwarranted but an aggressive policy against the war is conceivable given the perceptible shift in attitudes stemming from left-wing minority discontent in 1914 to the massive uneasiness evident by 1918. Equally, while the policy adopted was an unsatisfactory compromise in the interests of party unity, revealing in the manner of its devising and submission to the movement at large the significant desire for consensus, the loss of confidence and authority of the federal leadership in the fields of defence and foreign policy was clearly apparent. In effect, the first serious reconsideration by conference of these policies since 1908 saw the threatened eclipse of FPLP prerogatives in essentially federal parliamentary issues, by the same independent state initiatives which compelled the FPLP to split in 1916, barely prevented by an ambitious federal caucus member and a strong, capable Labor Premier. Considering the narrowness of the radical defeat, one of the intractable figures at Perth, Don Cameron, wrote confidently

I am satisfied that Tudor, Ryan and others who helped to defeat us are very much impressed with the fight we put up - although we had not crystallised our ideas in the shape of decisions as they have done - we are that close on their heels that I will be very much surprised if they don't shift some.[1]

How far this pattern marked an aberration from the long established norm was a central problem for the post-war ALP.

[1] Cameron-Ross 24 June, 1918. R.S. Ross papers NLA JAF 56/1/40.

CHAPTER FOUR

ALP defence and foreign policies - 1919-1930

The state of the parties post-1918

During the 1914 - 18 war the ALP policy making process had been tested to the limits and the established superiority over defence and foreign relations of the FPLP leaders barely maintained during the last year of the conflict, at the cost of moving a considerable distance towards the radical position on Australia's part in the war. The challenge had developed out of the conscription crisis which split the FPLP, New South Wales, South Australian and Western Australian parties and deeply impressed the other three state parties. However the structure for decision making remained substantially unchanged with the only new factor being the federal executive of the ALP, an initial failure whose effectiveness changed only slowly after the war.

The reason for this is that the executive does little or nothing in between meetings. It is often on the wrong side of the ledger and its secretary (Mr. Stewart) has his own work to attend to ... Lacking persistence and continuity the executive is largely a futility; it 'recommends', and 'proposes' and 'suggests' but to a large extent relies upon the state executives to mutually consent to and finalise its work; if they fail to agree to a given proposition, then the prospects are that the proposition will die still-born. [1]

A real role for this organisation was only established by attempts to restore order within the NSW Labor party in the interwar period and its influence either in policy formation or interpretation was minimal.

FPLP leadership during the twenties was at best indifferent, depending upon the vagaries of the availability of talent. Tudor remained leader until his death in 1922, having always been overshadowed on issues by people such as Catts, whose unwise embroilment in NSW

[1] Report of W.A. federal executive delegates A. Clementson and T.J. Lutey. Minutes W.A. state executive 2 July, 1919.

faction fighting brought about his eclipse in caucus, where he was succeeded as secretary by AWU man Arthur Blakely, then expulsion in 1922. The intended successor to Tudor, T.J. Ryan, had a tragically brief presence before his untimely death in 1921 and leader from 1922-8 was NSW member Mathew Charlton whose admirable personal charm was not matched by the drive or intellect for successful tenure of high office. Only after the accession to the leadership of J.H. Scullin and E.G. Theodore's delayed entry into federal parliament in 1927 did this situation improve. The others - men such as Brennan, Anstey and Fenton - were unsuited to the highest office and the dearth of talent was accentuated by lack of experience in the FPLP once former ministers such as Higgs, Mahon and Gardiner made their several exits from federal politics in the early twenties.

Despite the importance of pressure groups and factions during 1916-18, the end of the war inaugurated a period of structural stability in most Labor parties offering little opportunity for radical successes. In Victoria a long era of rule by a stable elite began, even the VSP surviving the difficult parturition of a Communist faction only to encounter an ever decreasing influence in the Labor party. Most consistent pressure for change came from the Victorian ARU but the few brief and unsatisfactory Labor governments in that state during the twenties caused little by way of change. [1] Queensland unions began to run into difficulties and disillusionment with the Labor regimes running uninterruptedly there from 1915-1929, from the very end of the war [2] and a series of bitter clashes developed. Divisions between the principle unions separated the AWU, usually supporting the governments, from the ARU branch whose radical leaders were ruthlessly driven out of the party. Efforts at organisation of an industrial section by the Ironworkers in late 1926 and the Brisbane TLC in 1927 - 28 to compel a more responsive

[1] D. Rawson, The Organisation of the ALP, 1954; L.J. Louis Trade Unions and the Depression, Canberra, 1968.

[2] T. Cutler, 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday. The Townsville Meatworkers' Strike of 1918-19'. in J. Iremonger and others, Strikes. Sydney, 1973.

attitude in the party were abortive. [1] AWU conservatism was a great influence also in South Australia, where that union maintained a dominant role in the party and radical influence was so negligible as to barely affect party aims and methods. [2] Western Australian Labor had realigned itself with the rest of the ALP in the last years of the war and with the departure of radicals such as Cameron to work in more rewarding fields in the eastern states the way was left clear for consolidation of moderate-parliamentary leadership and the problems of smallness and communications altered only gradually. [3] With J.A. Lyons as PLP leader Tasmanian Labor had a brief flirtation with the OBU and the socialisation objective in the early post-war years, due as much to the enthusiasm of Lyons himself as to the insistence of militant unions, but once Lyons had a real prospect of office these radical aims were disregarded, along with principle sections of the party platform, in the interests of the electoral victory enjoyed from 1923 - 8. [4]

Most action occurred in the NSW branch where the factionalism engendered during the war, far from abating, continued with redoubled fury producing a length period of high instability and culminating in the dictatorship of J.T. Lang and his group at the end

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- [1] A.A. Morrison, 'Militant Labour in Queensland, 1912-1927.' RAHS. 38,5 1952 pp.209-234; E.M.Higgins, 'Queensland Labor: Trade Unionists versus Premiers'. H.S. 9,34 May, 1960.pp.140-155; E.H. Lane Dawn to Dusk Brisbane, 1939. H.McQueen, 'Labor versus the Unions'. Arena 20,1969.pp.23-34.
 - [2] D. Hopgood, 'The View from Head Office: The S.A. Labor Political Machine, 1917-30'. Politics 6, 1 May, 1971 pp.70-8; J. Playford A History of the Left Wing of the S.A. Labor Movement, 1908-1938. B.A. honors, Adelaide 1958.
 - [3] D. Black, 'The Collier Government, 1924-1930'. University Studies in Western Australian History 3, 3 October, 1959 pp.58-70.
 - [4] M. McRae, 'The Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions, 1903-1923'. Tasmanian Historical Research Association 5, 1955 pp.4-13; P.R. Hart, 'J.A. Lyons, Tasmanian Labour Leader'. Labour History 9, November 1965 pp.33-42.

of the decade. [1] The NSW story during the twenties was important not only in itself but for the effect upon federal Labor politics. One of the first developments in NSW after the war was the determination of the AWU and parliamentarians to destroy the Industrial Vigilance Council

- [1] This fascinating period has been extensively researched, major sources being Rawson op.cit.; I.E. Young, Conflict within the NSW Labour Party, 1919-34. M.A. Sydney, 1961 and The Impact of J.T. Lang on the NSW Labor Party 1929-43. M.A. University NSW 1963; 'Catholics and the NSW Labor Party, 1919 - 39'. APSA News 6, 4 November 1961 pp.19-30; 'Changes within the NSW Branch of the Australian Workers' Union in 1919-24'. Journal of Industrial Relations 6, 1 March, 1964 pp.51-60; 'A.C. Willis: Welsh Nonconformist and the Labor Party in New South Wales, 1911-33'. Journal of Religious History 2, 1962-3 pp.303-13. Also M. Dixon Reformists and Revolutionaries: an interpretation of the relations between the socialists and mass Labor organisations in N.S.W. 1919-27. Ph.D. ANU 1965; 'Reformists and Revolutionaries in NSW, 1920-22'. Politics, 1, 2 November, 1966 pp. 135-151; 'The First Communist "United Front" in Australia'. Labour History 10, May 1966 pp.20-31; 'The Role of Ideology: Lang and Labor's Faction War, 1920-27'. APSA papers August, 1969; 'Ideology, the Trades Hall Reds and J.T. Lang'. Politics, 6, 1 May, 1971 pp.53-65; R. Cooksey New South Wales Politics 1925-32 with special reference to J.T. Lang, B.A. honors, Sydney, 1960.

which had proved so successful as a faction and by the end of 1917 had taken up the issues of the OBU and socialisation. With this step the AWU/militant-union alliance finally collapsed and after the NSW party split at state conference in June, 1919 with Willis leading radicals out of the party to form an industrial-based socialist Labor party the AWU-packed IVC was disbanded in August. [1] It had served its purpose as a catalyst of anti-parliamentary opposition and provided the ladder to success for the new leadership in state executive but its very success under the remaining group of radicals from 1917-19 threatened the executive. The greatest success of the IVC after the victory over Holman had been its near triumph in 1918 in influencing the federal conference on the issue of war policy, enabled by the unique role created in the power struggle in 1916 for it which had survived upon the institutionalised suspicion of political leaders created in the NSW party during the Holman reign. As the most influential Labor pressure group at state and federal level, success had led to the destruction of the IVC but pressures from radical sections of the Labor parties remained and were in fact strongly fuelled during the 1919-21 period by the rising industrial militancy within the union movement which characterised those years as some of the most turbulent ever experienced. [2] Stimulated by the reaction to the war, the Russian revolution and a proliferation of left wing groups and parties competing for worker support there was no lack of radical demands in general currency and it only remained to be seen what new channels of influence upon the ALP could be devised and how effective they would be.

[1] V. Molesworth, 'The Labor Party Crisis of 1919'. Molesworth papers MS 243/1/13 Vol.C; Third and Last Annual Report of the IVC, 1919.

[2] Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics pp.194-202.

Defence, 1919 -21

One issue at least was settled as far as the vast majority of the entire Labor movement was concerned - support for abolition of the provisions in the Defence Act for compulsory training and the call-up of trained manpower in time of war and continued antipathy to compulsory overseas service. After the 1918 federal conference Labor policy was for restriction of training to the 21-25 years age group under reformed conditions of service, use of which force could only be sanctioned for home defence by explicit decision of parliament. Furthermore, no voluntary force for overseas service was to be raised or committed to a foreign conflict without the approval of the people 'by initiative and referendum'. Invocation of the Japanese threat had been instrumental in the approval of this scheme but following the Armistice an emotional repugnance against standing armies, citizen armies and militarism of all sorts rose to a climax and proved irresistible, despite the continuing importance of Japan, both for Labor and the government. This was demonstrated most strongly in organs such as the Labor Call in Victoria, which warned

Whatever may be the result of the war it seems certain the Pacific will be the scene of future conflict... Be not deceived - you are up against it. Australia is an appendage of Asia. The external problems of the Commonwealth arise out of Asia, not out of Europe. [1] Two rules must govern Australian foreign policy. The one is that the greatest possible number of powerful nations should have material interests in the Pacific Ocean and the neighbouring parts of the Indian Ocean. The other is that Australia should avoid any extension of her frontiers by the acquisition of island dependencies ... (Australia) must insist that the League of Nations shall become something more than the mere shadow of Dr. Wilson's mind ... Australia should see that the League has plenty of work in Oceania. [2] It should be Australia's policy to surround her coast with submarine bases and no stone should be left unturned to perfect her aircraft. [3]

[1] Labor Call 18 July, 1918

[2] Ibid. 13 February, 1919

[3] Ibid. 3 April, 1919 Similar views were expressed by Labor papers in other states with the exception of Henry Boote in the Australian Worker who vacillated on the Japan threat and currently was rejecting it as a capitalist bogey used to sustain militarism. Boote's views cannot be taken as expressive of official AWU policy.

Labor men such as Catts and Ryan were outraged at the disclosure in 1919 of the spheres of influence deal concluded between Japan and Britain [1] and when the Versailles Treaty was announced Catts launched a bitter attack upon the government.

... the man, or men, who agreed to that compact committed the most traitorous act that ever occurred in the history of Australia. ... The effect of the settlement is that Australia has taken its frontiers northward to Rabaul but the frontiers of Japan have been brought southward 3,000 miles to the equator until their front door and our back door almost adjoin. With great deliberation I say that Germany ... would be a preferable neighbour to Japan. I would rather have a white race as a buffer between this country and the hordes of Asia than set up an aggressive colored race in the islands, than I would open the gates to practically 400,000,000 of the Asiatic agony (sic) to come to our very gates .[2].

Catts desired the question to be thrown open to debate in parliament, but in the turmoil of postwar problems could not inspire the support of his FPLP colleagues, [3] who were on the whole merely thankful that the conflict had ceased.

Fear of Japan remained the chief concern of service advisers in postwar defence planning , [4] and this did not go unnoticed by the more concerned members of the Labor parties. [5]

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- [1] Speech by T.J. Ryan in Perth 9 June, 1919.
Westralian Worker 13 June, 1919.
 - [2] Speech in House of Representatives reported Labor News 27 September, 1919.
 - [3] FPLP 14 August, 10, 11, 18, 25 September, 1919.
 - [4] See Jellicoe Report on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia May - August 1919. CPP 4. 21 October, 1919. pp.471-566.
 - [5] e.g. Curtin, Westralian Worker, 3 October, 1919.

Despite this the majority of the movement was unimpressed: it would be hard to over-emphasize the immense feeling of relief which accompanied cessation of hostilities and the last thing many Laborites felt was concern with defence and foreign relations in the first flush of the establishment of peace.

When the ALP federal conference convened at Sydney in June, 1919 for preparation of peacetime policies the numbers were already firm for abolition of the old defence plank. S.A. state conference had approved an AWU motion for abolition of all compulsory clauses in the Defence Act [1] and after Queensland AWU delegates had resolved on an identical motion, Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention also endorsed it once the urgings of Ernie Lane overcame opponents who raised the white Australia issue. [2] This became the QCE recommendation to federal conference. [3] Victoria's Labor party met in conference from 18-21 April, 1919, and Ben Mulvogue led with an attack against four Victorian representatives at the 1918 federal conference for disregarding their instructions to vote against any compulsory training scheme. Scullin and others objected to changing the defence plank on the grounds of the danger to white Australia but went down by 101 - 33 votes. He, Blackburn and McNeill thereupon withdrew their candidacy for the 1919 federal delegation in protest against the Victorian decision. [4] A similar climate prevailed in the NSW party, where factional antagonisms were temporarily forgotten to 'enthusiastically' carry a resolution against all compulsory

[1] Minutes S.A. Labor conference 13 September, 1918

[2] The vote was 38-20. Minutes Labor-in-Politics Convention 2 February, 1919; E.H. Lane, Dawn to Dusk p. 214

[3] QCE Minutes, 11 February, 1919

[4] Labor Call 22 May, 1919.

clauses by 110 - 18, over the objections of Senators Grant and Gardiner who feared Japan. [1] Only the Tasmanians remained committed to the compulsory trained defence force after a motion for abolition was withdrawn at its state conference, Japan again being the chief counter-argument raised. [2] Militants in all the state parties resorted to significantly similar arguments, confirming that this complete reversal of party policy on defence was popularly supported by the great majority who were prepared to accept the corollary to their attitude that, as Scullin and others pointed out, implied future support for professional, regular armed services. There was a deeply felt reaction ^{against} over four years of war.

The experiences of the workers of Australia during the last four and a half years are such as to have embittered them against militarism in all its varied forms of iniquity. It is true that there are evils attached to a volunteer force and that until the world becomes safe enough for total abolition Australia will probably continue to retain some form of defence, but with the abolition of conscription and compulsory training the growth of militarism can be held in check and expenditure considerably curtailed. [3]

When Gardiner defended the 1918 defence plank on the basis of the Japanese threat at federal conference in Sydney despite the NSW decision, he was reminded of his instruction amid a chorus of revulsion from delegates at what had been endured since 1914. Upon a vote of 22-1 the first clause in Labor's defence plank became 'Deletion of all clauses relating to compulsory training and service'. [4] All other sections as decided the previous year remained, except for slight alteration of the final provision at a Tasmanian suggestion to become the more flexible

[1] Labor News 21 June, 1919.

[2] World 6 May, 1919. A citizen force of compulsory trainees over 18 years of age was submitted as Tasmania's recommendation to federal conference. Agenda 1919 federal conference items, 79, 81.

[3] Labor News 28 June, 1919.

[4] The lone dissenter was Mrs. Seery, a NSW delegate wanting a flat declaration against all militarism.

No raising of forces for service outside the Commonwealth, or participation or promise of participation in any future overseas war, except by a decision of the people. [1]

Meanwhile, faced with complex problems of postwar reconstruction the party felt that defence spending could well be downgraded, arguing that there were sufficient trained men for reactivation in an emergency and that in the light of the experience of late 1914 it would not take long to build a worthwhile force upon a small foundation of regulars. [2] Arthur Blakeley cited FPLP success in checking profligate defence expenditure as a major accomplishment in the FPLP report for 1921. [3]

Pressures for retention of the old defence scheme remained after the June conference, indicating that support for the ten-year-old policy died hard. It was particularly apparent in the Victorian Labor leadership and within weeks of the Sydney meeting state executive registered dissatisfaction at decisions made there, particularly the party's land tax policy, circulating other states with a suggestion for a special federal conference to be convened as soon as possible to reconsider both this, the defence and war-related issues. NSW state executive was then dominated by the AWU group and people such as Catts kept the altered strategic situation before party audiences: on 10 July executive agreed to the Victorian request. [4] Tasmania found the notice too short to overcome transport and financial difficulties [5] and South Australia also declined federal executive's invitation to a special conference 'to reconsider defence and land tax resolutions'. [6] The two other states agreed to support the request but were divided over the agenda: in Brisbane the state secretary addressed the QCE

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- [1] Replacing the phrase 'except by initiative and referendum'. Presumably the 'decision of the people' was something to be interpreted by a future federal Labor government: this point was never elaborated. Report ALP federal conference June 1919. pp.74-77.
 - [2] See debates on the 1920 defence estimates CPD XCIII 23 September, 1920. Tudor pp.4244-5; Anstey pp.4918-20; McGrath pp.4922-3; Fenton p.4926.
 - [3] Contained in Report of NSW state executive 1921. p.6
 - [4] Labor News 19 July, 1919.
 - [5] Minutes Tasmanian state executive 22 July, 1919.
 - [6] S.A. ALP. Council Minutes 15 August, 1919.

'and stated that the opinion was held by many that in view of last conference's decision in favor of deletion of the compulsory clauses of the Act it was necessary for conference to more clearly define Labor's policy in regard to defence'. However a proposal for a more positive declaration of the new policy lapsed [1] while in Perth the Western Australian executive relied upon the advice of returning federal delegate J.J. Kenneally that any backtracking would be electorally disadvantageous and resolved to protest against any attempt to alter the new plank. [2] On 2 October special conference duly convened, again in Sydney, and after a strenuous battle led by Catts and fellow NSW delegates, agreed to consider other business not on the agenda. Enough trouble was encountered in raising and obtaining approval for T.J. Ryan to be invited to enter federal politics and to lead the election campaign to discourage going beyond consideration of Labor banking and finance proposals and the opportunity to reconsider defence did not arise. [3]

An additional and essential dimension of the ALP federal platform was its explanation and elaboration by the FPLP, particularly at election times. For the December, 1919 federal elections caucus elected Tudor, Gardiner and Higgs to form a manifesto committee with federal executive officers and campaign director T.J. Ryan to draft Labor's appeal to the electorate. [4]. In their ordering of priorities the resultant document reflected the severe downgrading by Labor leaders of defence, concentrating upon the rural policy in a bid to capture a proportion of the emerging country vote and featuring defence policy in eighth position only. The appeal was confined to a promise to repeal the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act and to 'provide for the effective defence of the Commonwealth on the most modern and efficient lines.' [5] Catts' own policy speech, also given prominence

[1] QCE Minutes 1 August, 1919.

[2] W.A. state executive Minutes, 15 September, 1919.

[3] Labor News 11 October, 1919; Report ALP special federal conference October 1919.

[4] FPLP 2 October, 1919.

[5] ALP Official Manifesto. Labor News 8 November 1919.

in the Labor press was more explicit, stating reliance upon submarine^s and aircraft to keep potential invaders at arm's length and an army to be composed of voluntary enrolled veterans and citizens.

Submarine and aircraft defence of continental Australia was a persistent theme in ALP defence policies elaborated by new federal leader Charlton in a major statement in 1923, [1] after support for the doctrine had been indicated by Victorian leaders and Curtin since at least 1918. The latter influenced A.E. 'Texas' Green, Labor shadow defence minister during the twenties, who along with Charlton quoted extensively from current exponents of airpower and submarine forces in support of the policy. In fact these arguments were flawed and were not applied by the party in office, [2] but owed their popularity mainly to political attractiveness. These technically complicated weapons depended upon regular, volunteer forces, were (mistakenly) considered relatively cheap and highly effective as a method of fending off raids or thrusts against Australia. Above all they did not compel maintenance of a large military establishment at home nor did they depend upon continuing association and training with British forces to preserve efficiency, as did the RAN.

Foreign policy, 1919 - 1921

Labor's foreign policy provisions did not preclude future overseas military involvement but contained what was seen as a built-in check against too ready acceptance of the role of unquestioning sub-imperialist power and proclaimed in advance that an immediate threat to Australia would have to be discernible before participation in further conflicts was sanctioned. The ease with which Australia had found herself at war had made a profound impression and laid the basis for a durable suspicion of too close a connection with British imperial diplomacy in the interwar era. [3] For a number of influential leaders the disadvantages of the British connection resulted in

[1] CPD 104 27 July, 1923 pp.1729-41.

[2] J.M. McCarthy, 'The ALP and the Armed Services: Theory and Practice, 1919-1949.' *Labour History* 25 November, 1973 pp. 58-67.

[3] Labor became the exemplar of one side in the division between Australian and Austral-British nationalism explored for example by Russell Ward, 'Two Kinds of Australian Patriotism'. *Victorian Historical Magazine* 41, 1. February 1970 pp 225-243.

the hope of engaging American involvement in the Pacific, Ryan and others being concerned not to risk antagonising that country and this concern was evident in Labor opposition to renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. [1] Another alternative to reliance upon Great Britain lay in the newly formed League of Nations, a body never enthusiastically regarded by Australian Labor from the start. For some such as Frank Anstey the League was a sham, a 'League of Victors' unworthy of serious support however admirable its original animating spirit. [2] When in Europe on Queensland government business T.J. Ryan had been appointed ALP delegate to the Second (Amsterdam) International conference meeting simultaneously with that at Versailles and after the International gave approval of the League concept as a guarantor of the peace settlement Ryan had felt obliged to enter a serious reservation on the part of his party to membership of the League.

I found it necessary to record my objection to the League of Nations resolution which would enable a super-national authority to interfere with the domestic policy of imposing tariffs or, for example, with the policy of a White Australia. [3]

Federal conference endorsed his stand and contented itself with passing another in what was becoming a long string of decisions commending the concept of international linkages but which led to little in practical developments.

Few reposed much hope in the League after its first few years of existence; by 1923 Charlton regretted that it had never been given a chance, [4] an opinion reinforced by experience when as ALP leader of the opposition he was part of the Australian delegation to the fifth assembly of the League at Geneva 1 September - 2 October 1924. In this international forum Charlton stated his belief that the purposes for which the League had been formed remained of critical importance but unless its performance could be improved beyond its

[1] FPLP 14 April, 1921. Also C.A. Hicks, The Impossible Alliance. Australia, the U.S. and the Postwar Settlement of 1919. M.A. ANU, 1970.

[2] Labor Call 13 March, 1919.

[3] Report of T.J. Ryan on the Berne/Amsterdam Socialist Conference 1919. Report ALP federal conference, June 1919. pp.56-9. Also speech given by Ryan upon return to Australia before W.A. Labor Conference. W.W. 13 June, 1919.

[4] CPD 104. 27 July, 1923 p.1733.

present accomplishments

the public confidence in the utility of the League of Nations to secure peace will be dissipated and the energy and good work accomplished ... will be of no avail ... We (the ALP) are in favor of the League of Nations and want to see it make good. But we do say that if there is to be delay year after year, disaster will overtake the League. [1]

This attitude of pessimistic support persisted amongst parliamentary Labor representatives for the remainder of the decade.

In the extra-parliamentary wing the left disparaged the League mercilessly; even the enthusiasts such as E.R. Voigt, director and secretary of the Labor Research and Information Bureau established in Sydney in the early twenties, condemned both the League and its offshoot the International Labor Office, which

has no more effective power to interfere with industrial organisation than the League of Nations has to interfere with national government. Neither organisation will accomplish the emancipation or even materially advance the interests of the working class as a whole.

Despite this ineffectuality and the left wing prejudice Voigt believed that the statistical and information services provided by the ILO were useful and urged that they be taken advantage of in Australia. [2] A succession of Australian delegates nominated by the state capital TLCs in turn were accordingly sent to ILO sessions: E.J. Holloway in 1923, John Curtin in 1924, George Lawson from Brisbane in 1925, but they were hampered by the lack of adequate remuneration for the prolonged absences from jobs involved and the general tokenism of the Australian government's participation in League activities. [3] Unions fought a

[1] Copy of Charlton's speech reprinted Westralian Worker 12 December, 1924.

[2] Circular from Labor Research and Information Bureau n.d. - (possibly November 1922) - W.A. state executive correspondence, folder 234, International.

[3] Curtin in Westralian Worker 5 September, 1924; Lawson - Secretary W.A. state executive, state executive correspondence op.cit. Report of International Labor Delegate 24 September, 1925.

vain battle with the Bruce-Page government to obtain control over nomination and selection of the Labor delegate for Australia and in a bid to upgrade the assistance available to such delegates. [1]

Trade Union delegates regularly presented favorable reports of their experiences in Geneva, [2] but could cite little practical advantage beyond moral invigoration as the government neglected to ratify key agreements reached by the ILO. In view of such disadvantages, financial limitations and the prevailing climate of uninterest, there was little follow-up by the union movement or ALP to this connection or any of a number of other international contacts at conferences during the twenties. [3] Major outlet for the internationalism of powerful left wing activists in the unions lay in rather different directions.

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- [1] Holloway, Secretary Melbourne THC - S.M. Bruce, 11 February, 1926. UTLC Minutes 12 March, 1926; P. Deane, Secretary of Prime Minister's Department/Department of External Affairs - C. Crofts, Secretary Commonwealth Council of Federated Unions, Melbourne 18 February, 1926 ibid. 26 February, 1926; Crofts, Secretary ACTU - T.P. Howard, Secretary UTLC 15 February, 1929 enclosing correspondence with the government ibid. 8 March, 1929.
 - [2] J. Curtin - S.M. Bruce 5 September, 1924 quoted in A. Chester, John Curtin. Sydney, 1943 p.38.
 - [3] Basically the obstacles remained constant: W.H. Kitson MLC and H.V. Evatt MLA (Western Australia and NSW respectively) represented the ALP at a World Migration Conference, London in 1926, where 'Dr. Evatt had a most strenuous time combating efforts to modify the attitude taken up by Australia re White Australia and (immigration) restriction. In fact, on several occasions there was almost a complete breakdown'. Report of delegates Labor Call 28 October, 1926; W.H. Kitson - E.H. Barker 22 June, 1926, W.A. state executive correspondence file 237, Miscellaneous K; Report by Muriel A. Hargrey first British Commonwealth Labor Conference, London 27 July - 1 August, 1925 ibid. file 217, Federal executive; Report by A. Walker, second British Commonwealth Labor Conference, London July, 1928; Appended to Report ALP federal conference, 1930 pp.92-3; L.F. Crisp, The Australian Federal Labour Party, pp. 104, 107.

Internationalism and isolationism, 1921-1924

During the war there had been established a pattern whereby the policies of union militants were successfully urged and even their control established over some state Labor parties due to structural conflict bred of dissatisfaction with the parliamentary leadership of those parties. As the unionists developed views upon the war these were imposed in identical fashion to purely industrial demands, with the result that in 1918 ALP war policy was very nearly determined by the radicals in control of the Industrial Vigilance Council in NSW, with the support of a few radical delegates from each of the state delegations. Once firm, stable party leadership had been re-established in all states except NSW, where the factions were almost wholly occupied in the sheer battle for survival, this mode of influence was severely circumscribed, having been developed during conditions of exceptional instability. This did not leave the FPLP leadership free however to re-establish its prewar dominance in federal policy making, for opposition to conscription overseas and compulsory military training at home was elevated to the level of fundamental party dogma and a check had been placed on further military involvement abroad in alliance with Britain, or any other power, by explicit platform provision. Prospects for a continuing direct influence upon ALP policy after the war were not particularly encouraging as individual TLCs were limited vis a vis state parties and despite rudimentary organisational effort, possessed no combined federal voice. Largest single union, the national AWU, had entrenched itself in some of the state parties and had representation in the FPLP, but was consistently moderate and conservative in tactics and policies after consolidation in the postwar years. All others lacked the size and strength to attain a similar position alone but events were soon to provide the opportunity for a temporary unity with consequent results upon the effectiveness of the radical unions in federal Labor councils.

Stimulated by the experiences during the war, the Russian revolution in 1917 and continuing economic dissatisfactions, left wing radicalism became the prevailing climate in the union movement [1] This found embodiment in demands for new objectives and new organisation - socialism and the One Big Union - and for a time it appeared as if the ALP would lose a substantial portion of its supporters to an industrial socialist political party. This threat particularly impressed the ALP federal executive which, at a meeting in Melbourne on 14 October, 1920,

seriously took stock of the movement and its relationship to the changed outlook of our members, and unanimously agreed that owing to the changing psychology of the great mass of the people in this country, and all other countries, the time has arrived when it was necessary to get a clearly defined industrial policy which would be abreast of the times and be acceptable to the majority of our members in the industrial as well as the political wings of the movement. With this object in view it was decided to convene through the various state branches an All-Australian Industrial Conference, and immediately after that an interstate ALP conference, to ratify or reject the decisions arrived at. [2]

It was conceived of as an opportunity to effect a reconciliation between the progressively diverging industrial and political wings of the Labor movement to the mutual benefit of each. [3]

Several hundred delegates representing the interests of a very high proportion of the entire union, movement convened in Melbourne between 20 - 25 June, 1921, certainly the biggest and most representative such gathering yet held in Australia. Chief issue at stake was adoption of the socialist objective and, after its adoption, the likelihood of its implementation by the ALP. Trust was eventually reposed in the latter party but a Council of Action was elected from

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- [1] L. Ross, 'From Lane to Lang: the evolution of Labor theory . A.Q.6, 4 December, 1934 pp.49-62; P.J. O'Farrell 'The Russian Revolution and the Labour Movements' of Australia and New Zealand, 1917-22'. International Review of Social History 8, 1963 pp.177-97; Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics. chapters 8-10.
 - [2] Federal executive report, Report ALP federal conference 1921 p.3.
 - [3] J.H. Catts Labor News 23 October, 1920; E.J. Holloway, presidential address at All-Australian Trade Union Congress Westralian Worker 24 June, 1921.

conference to press the matter. [1]. Included also on the agenda were several defence and foreign policy items reflecting the newly emerged radical consensus: both AWU head office and the Rockhampton branch, Waterside Workers' Federation submitted essentially similar items calling for the Australian Labor movement to associate with movements of other lands to prevent future outbreaks of war. [2] Holloway's opening address referred to the same matter:

Militarism had to go and it was necessary to see that they were not drawn into any secret peace or war treaties, and no alliance made outside Australia should be obeyed by the people of Australia.

The prevailing climate was isolationist only in respect of the discredited Empire connection; Australian unionists looked to international contacts at the working class level. After a preliminary discussion on war in which Sydney Labor Council leader J.S. Garden advocated an outright pacifist stand, a sub-committee was appointed for the drafting of proposals, consisting of Ernie Lane from Queensland, Don Cameron, now a VSP official, E.A. Painter of Melbourne THC, Roy Beardsworth, Peter Rasmussen, W. Carey, T.J. Smith and several other unionists. On the final day of Congress the committee reported back with a proposal that delegates pledge 'individually and collectively to ^{refuse to} participate in any war outside the Commonwealth of Australia' and to cooperate with the working classes of all countries, 'with a view of preventing war'. Only one member, Painter, dissented and in a minority report recommended endorsement of the ALP platform advocating arbitration of international disputes and no Australian involvement in war 'except by a decision of the people'. Painter further spoke in favor of affirmation of Labor's defence plank, urging that Congress

.... realising the dangers of being unarmed in an armed world, recognises the necessity of making adequate provision for national defence. Such provision to consist of citizen defence force, Australian owned and controlled navy and air force.

[1] Turner, Industrial Labor and Politics pp.217-22

[2] The AWU item specifically referred to a 'Labor League of Nations'. See items 6 and 13 Agenda, Official Report All-Australian Trade Union Congress, 1921

All members however were unanimous in condemning the government's continuation of compulsory military training as 'unduly harsh and morally degrading', [1] and this last recommendation was readily adopted by Congress. Debate then centered upon the attitude towards future wars and was resolved by a resolution compromising between the isolationist position and that of support for the existing Labor platform by taking up the matter raised in agenda items - urging

the workers in all countries to form councils of action, and as the Pacific is likely to be the cockpit of the next great war, the council of action elected by congress be instructed to get into communication with Labor organisations generally and particularly with those countries bordering on the Pacific, for the purpose of preventing future wars'. [2]

Any real danger of military threat was thus not discounted in an excess of pacifist optimism, rather Australian unionists sought an alternative response in revival of the ill fated pre-1914 Second International policy, this time specifically addressed to the Pacific. Shortly after Congress broke up the council of action, elected by it and containing leading radicals Baddeley and Willis of the Miners' Federation, Harry Holland, Jack Garden, R.S. Ross, and also more moderate figures like Scullin, Birrell, Blakeley, Barnes and Curtin, immediately endeavoured through Holloway to establish overseas contacts. Having formulated their positions the unions looked to the ALP for endorsement and implementation of them.

As the ALP had promised a federal conference was convened in Brisbane during October, 1921 to determine the payoff for continued recognition by the unions of political action through the Labor parties. Essentially it had to balance the new union demands against the need for broad electoral support, a consideration possessing not just the politicians but many union figures themselves, although felt most acutely by delegates such as E.G. Theodore, now Queensland

[1] Military Committee Report of All-Australian TUC, 1921.

[2] Westralian Worker, 22 July, 1921.

Premier. Lengthy and at times vituperative debate over the socialisation objective culminated in its adoption as a theoretical aspiration but with escape clauses for political leaders; in Turner's phrase, federal conference 'by a neat piece of conjuring, changed their socialist tiger into a sacred cow.' [1] At the end of the session on the fourth day, 13 October, Blackburn moved item 6, the Trade Union Congress resolution for concerted international action. It was countered however by a NSW amendment from Power and O'Dea suggesting adoption of a straight isolationist refusal to fight outside Australia. [2] Next day leading opponent of the socialist objective, Theodore, agreed that as the TUC resolution did not preclude retention of a reasonable defence scheme, as others such as Catts feared, and although sceptical as to the results indicated his general agreement with it. Despite substantial support for the amendment it was defeated 13 - 12 and the TUC motion approved. [3] Although compulsory military training was condemned, all other military items including calls for disarmament were struck off, despite Blackburn's calling of attention to the alternatives implied by that decision - support for a regular military establishment or no defence forces at all. Conference instead took Scullin's advice not to specify future defence policy during the current state of flux (the Washington conference currently underway) but await developments, as 'The movement at present was divided on the matter'. [4] Conference thus held the line on both defence and foreign policy as laid down in the 1918-19 platform [5], approval of the trade union internationalist stance implying no more than committal to the general motion rather than concrete measures.

[1] Industrial Labour and Politics, p.226

[2] As carried by the NSW state conference in 1921. Labor News 2 April, 1921. Power, a party vice-president, had successfully opposed there a call for unilateral disarmament although it was agreed to campaign in favor of multilateral measures to that end. Ibid. 9 April, 1921

[3] Report ALP federal conference, 1921. pp.28-31.

[4] Ibid. p.37.

[5] Only other foreign policy resolutions being a rejection of Australian implication in military alliances, ibid. pp.34,41, and endorsement of the principle of self-determination for Ireland ibid. p.34

As an exercise in retaining the support of the trade unions, 1921 federal conference was an admirable success, the TUC council declaring at the end of the year that 'On principle all that was asked for has been adopted', [1] but between principle and performance lay a gulf most tellingly revealed by the subsequent fate of socialism in the ALP. Gaining acceptance on the coat-tails of the principle issue, the proposal for an international working class organisation to frustrate the militarism of capitalist governments fared equally badly. Both socialisation and the internationalist proposition had only been successfully urged upon the ALP because of special circumstances in the immediate postwar years which induced it to pay special heed to union demands in an attempt to placate working class dissatisfactions - indeed to actively solicit the views of the unions. Once the wave of militant discontent began to abate the radical program had little prospect of fruition. Another All-Australian Trade Union Congress was held in Melbourne in June, 1922 in an attempt to sustain the initiative and after considering more immediate organisational problems resolved further :

Whereas we believe another war to be in the nature of things capitalistic, and whereas we view with suspicion the conferences of Washington and Genoa (A conference for the stabilisation of international trade) as responsible for merely a re-alignment of warlike alliances; and whereas, despite all the disarmament measures, increased preparations for war are being made in the world's laboratories and factories; and whereas we fear that another war to end war will end civilisation, culture and progress; and whereas international working class action is essential for the preservation of permanent peace, this congress declares its uncompromising hostility to all forms of militarism and war, and urgently calls upon the workers to at once organise to prevent war by linking up with each other in order to oppose the designs, methods and machinations of capitalistic governments; and, as a step in this direction, this congress instructs the Council of Action to convene a Pan-Pacific Congress of working class organisations, to meet next year in Australia, simultaneously with the Pan-Pacific Science Congress. [2]

[1] World 21 November, 1921

[2] Adopted on a motion by E.H. Lane and H. Kneebone.
Labor Call, 6 July, 1922.

The TUC and its executive shortly lapsed and no follow-up action resulted.

Nothing was done either by the ALP, if only because of the immobilism of the federal executive which prevented the federal party attaining anything more than spasmodic concerted action. After the April-May, 1922 federal executive meeting Alex McCallum morosely told W.A. state executive of

the absolutely hopeless position of the federal executive in carrying out functions which its position should warrant it performing ... The money provided is altogether totally inadequate and so long as the executive is without a fully paid official and without ordinary executive authority, so long will the movement be a disjointed six state movement and not an Australian one. [1]

Nor had the situation improved twelve months later when Arch. Stewart confessed 'that I am fed right up with the secretaryship of the federal executive. We are always behind, and have never up to date been able to place it on a satisfactory basis. [2] . Due to official uninterest and the parlous condition of the only Labor body competent to implement the commitment, the 1921 international initiative remained in abeyance.

Subject to the 1919 federal platform, the FPLP leadership remained free in expressing ALP policy from the opposition benches and to confirm fairly early its hostility to the Nationalist government's close adherence to British leadership in foreign relations, the dangers inherent in which were emphasised for the Labor party by the Chanak crisis in 1922. This involved Hughes having to agree to a publicised request from London for full support in a possible conflict

[1] W.A. state executive correspondence file 176
Federal executive, ALP.

[2] Stewart - H. Millington 21 June, 1923 Ibid. file 217, Victoria.

in the Dardanelles to the extent of contributing troops if required. [1] With volunteers gathering at Victoria Barracks in the war atmosphere it provoked, Chanak had a profound effect upon the ALP as an example of the ease with which unquestioning compliance with British policy could lead to involvement in highly dubious adventures at any time and supplied a nice illustration of a basic conflict between Labor and its opponents. Mathew Charlton plaintively asked the House 'Is ours but to do or die, and not to know the reason why?'

- to which a government backbencher replied 'I, personally, go so far as to say "My country right or wrong" '. [2] The crisis removed any remaining beliefs that August, 1914 was an unfortunate accident (which of course the socialists had consistently denied) and raised the appalling prospect that the whole horror could be again repeated without warning or options to consider. Hereafter the Imperial connection per se became an object of suspicion and stimulated a wave of isolationist sentiment at all levels of the Labor movement - AWU National Convention in early 1923 resolved that as the working classes had no stake in any overseas conflicts, members should develop 'effective resistance to our country's anticipation in any war outside the Commonwealth' [3]; NSW party organ Labor News incorrectly stated Labor policy as opposition to participation in any external conflict and declared that Australia could defend herself by withdrawing to defend her standards and living conditions 'against all comers' [3]; Queensland TLC endorsed a classic isolationist statement 'against any proposal to send Australian soldiers across to Europe, or elsewhere, to take part in any war in the interests of Imperialist Capitalism notwithstanding the result of any referendum that may be taken on the matter'. [4] This affected the FPLP, [5] Senator Gardiner even

[1] For the broad view see G.M. Gathorne-Hardy, A Short History of International Affairs 1920-1939. Fourth edition Oxford, 1950 pp.120-122; for more detailed treatment M. Arnold-Foster, 'Chanak Rocks the Empire'. Round Table 230 April 1968 p.169-177; P.M. Sales, 'W.M. Hughes and the Chanak Crisis of 1922'. AJPH 17, 3 December 1971 pp. 392-405.

[2] CPD 100 19 September, 1922. pp.2354 and 2357-8. The patriot was Sir Robert Best. See also the Senate debate on the Near East Crisis for further examples of the ALP attitude.

[3] Report AWU Convention 3 February, 1923. pp.43-4.

[4] Labor News 17 November, 1923.

[5] TLC Minutes 27 September, 1922; two days later state executive passed a similar motion QCE Minutes 29 Sept. 1922

temporarily entertaining a suggestion that Australia become a republic if the cost of Imperial membership was involvement in any and every skirmish or war fought by Britain. [1] In the closely following federal election Charlton promised to reduce defence expenditure to prewar levels, declared the hopelessness of securing an effective Dominion voice in Imperial foreign policy and stated that Labor would reserve its judgement upon any foreign commitments.

It is prepared to defend Australian life, liberty and property, but it claims the right of parliament to decide when such issues are at stake. Our policy is knowledge and responsibility in foreign affairs where they concern us, and capacity to mind our own business where they do not concern us. [2]

This period marked the height of isolationism in the Labor movement during the twenties, when serious consideration was given to changing ALP policy to absolute refusal to countenance foreign involvements. FPLP executive in early July, 1923 gave consideration to the defence plank as part of a general review of its policies and reported to full caucus its unanimous approval of 'no participation in overseas wars', noting the greater importance of submarines and aircraft as effective means of domestic defence but concluding that circumstances did not warrant any urgent necessity for laying down detailed proposals. [3] Almost immediately however the new Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce, initiated a debate on the forthcoming Imperial Conference which

[1] CPD 100 20 September, 1922 pp.2400-2403.

[2] ALP election manifesto 22 October, 1922.

[3] FPLP, 12, 19 July, 1923. As of 27 February, 1923 executive comprised Charlton, Gardiner as Deputy-leader, Frank Ansely assistant-leader in the House, Arthur Blakeley secretary, J.E. Fenton party whip with N.J.O. Makin, P.J. Moloney, J. Barnes and J.H. Scullin. It is significant that caucus defence committee: W.G. Mahoney, J. Mathews, D.C. McGrath, E. Needham and C.S. McHugh, together with such officers as cared to attend, was disregarded on the issue. Although a defence committee was usually appointed with other such bodies in the allocation of responsibilities at the first caucus meetings in a new parliament, the same pattern prevailed throughout the twenties at least: when an important statement had to be drafted or review made the caucus executive was invariably delegated to the task.

necessitated a statement of policy. Frank Brennan, a self-styled pacifist Victorian member, urged caucus to agree to proclaim Labor's 'unwillingness to participate in warlike operations beyond the Commonwealth'. Correctly the chairman, Gardiner, pointed out that this was an expansion of the federal platform and it was subsequently determined that Charlton's reply in parliament reiterate that Australian involvement in future overseas wars should be dependent upon 'a decision of the people'. [1].

Fear of automatic involvement in British quarrels and imperial clashes as an inescapable obligation of Dominion status extended to the party's reaction to the 1923 Imperial Conference decisions effectively establishing Imperial strategy for the remainder of the interwar era and involving Australia deeply in the Singapore scheme, which the ALP strongly resisted from the start. [2]. Labor's 'Chanak syndrome' was given periodic reinforcement during the remainder of the decade, thus stimulating the isolationist element. In 1925 civil disturbances in China and British involvement in defence of her concessions caused Charlton to protest:

If the British Empire became embroiled in any trouble we have the right to say whether we will go to her assistance or not; we should not be drawn into every war that occurs, irrespective of whether Australia is concerned in the dispute and even when the British Empire is concerned only

[1] Ibid. 28 July, 1923; CPD 104 27 July, 1923. pp.1729-41 for Charlton's speech.

[2] FPLP 25, 27 March, 1924; FPLP Report for 1924 reprinted in Report ALP federal conference, 1927; See 'Summary of Proceedings, Commonwealth of Nations Conference 1923'. CPP Session 1926-7. Vol.5 pp.1049 ff; also D.C. Watt, 'Imperial Defence and Foreign Policy, 1911-39. A Neglected Paradox?' JCPS 1, 3 May, 1963 pp. 266-81; for the strategy adopted J.M. McCarthy, 'Singapore and Australian Defence, 1921-42'. A.O. 25, 2 August, 1971 pp.165-80 and W.D. McIntyre, 'The Strategic Significance of Singapore 1917-42: the Naval Base and the Commonwealth'. Journal of Southeast Asian History 10, 1 March, 1969 pp. 77-89.

to a limited degree. [1]

News that the Australian cruiser HMAS Brisbane, on attachment to the R.N. China station under a training exchange scheme, was actually involved in British pacification action during the Shanghai Incident doubled the alarm, for Labor felt that this was an interference in the justifiable Chinese struggle for self-determination. [2] Two years later another clash occurred at Hankow and Kiukiang, exciting renewed fears of Australian involvement, [3] and again that same year Brennan raised a protest against despatch of HMAS Adelaide at British request to the Solomon Islands to support subjugation of rebellious natives. [3] Labor's embarrassment over foreign policy arose from this ambiguous attitude to association with Britain, exemplified by comparison of Charlton's emotional reaction to Chanak with his speech at the reception for a visiting R.N. squadron in Sydney, at which he stated that Labor stood for Australian defence,

and if the people of Australia were in favor of defending the Empire abroad, the Labor party would not hesitate to give them the opportunity of doing so ... He was not unmindful of what the Mother Country had done in the past, and he was amongst those who thought that it was necessary to stand shoulder to shoulder in regard to the Empire's defence in the future. [4]

In contrast, non-Labor enjoyed the electoral advantages of its generally

[1] CPD 110 25 June, 1925. p.465 *passim*.

[2] Charlton moved an urgency motion to discuss the matter ibid. 3 July, 1925 pp.703-6; Anstey p.710; W.M. Hughes in support pp.711-12; supplementary inquiries ibid. 8, 9 July; also Charlton's final appeal, 1925 federal election. Labor Call 12 November, 1925.

[3] Charlton SMH 25 February, 1927; CPD 115.2 March, 1927 p.21 and ibid. 8, 10, 11 March; FPLP 3 March, 1927; A.E. Green Labor Call 14 April, 1927.

[4] CPD 116.14 October, 1927 p.568; 2 November p.871; 3 November p.937; 15 November, p.1361.

uncritical support for Britain and Empire. [1]

Defence and Foreign policy, 1924 - 1930

Despite the low priority initially accorded to defence and foreign policy in the ALP after the war, these issues refused to conveniently disappear and in fact at every federal conference between 1919 and 1930 (excluding special conference in October, 1919) there were significant additions or alterations to the relevant platform sections. Two stages can be distinguished here: one from 1919 - early 1924 in which the postwar defence plank was established, the conditions imposed on Australian participation overseas under any Labor government formulated and both subjected to test by the course of events at home and abroad. By the end of this first period the major themes were present and the second, 1924 - 30, essentially comprised a working out of the themes established in earlier years. Following the challenge by radical unions in the early twenties and temporary toying with isolationism in foreign policy the dominance by the middle of the decade of the FPLP in federal policy making is the most significant feature in future party operation.

Acceptance of an imperial strategy laid down in 1923 involved the Bruce-Page government engaging forthwith in re-equipping of the navy as the principle defensive arm by an initial decision to replace a pair of cruisers. In parliament Anstey took advantage of his role as acting-leader in Charlton's absence on his trip to Geneva to move deferral of their construction pending the results of projected international disarmament talks, [2] an indulgence of a popular Labor aspiration which left to W.G. Mahoney the task of introducing the intended amendment asking that the cruisers be built in Australia, 'thus

[1] Now recognised as subject to genuine qualifications after Chanak, Arnold-Forster op.cit. and Sales op.cit. Nevertheless the response by Bruce was typically an attempt to remedy the difficulties by closer communication with London. C. Edwards, Bruce of Melbourne Melbourne, 1965 quoting Bruce pp.85-7; W.J. Hudson, Australian Diplomacy Melbourne, 1970 pp.20-1.

[2] FPLP 2, 10, 16, 17 July, 1924; CPD 107. 16 July, 1924 pp. 2115-20.

relieving the distress caused by unemployment and helping to develop Australian industries. [1] With another federal conference scheduled for October, 1924 and Charlton still overseas, federal caucus then bent to the preparation of its own recommendations. Anstey, seconded by Arthur Blakeley, proposed that the defence plank be updated by addition of the following principles -

Abolition of compulsory training; convertible factories, munitions, small arms; aeroplanes, air forces, depots; land forces, fortifications; mines, submarines; utilisation of science and industry for standardisation of rolling stock and materials, roads and railways. [2]

J.M. Gabb, a South Australian MHR who had resisted the opposition to cruiser construction, sought to add 'That the first item be "replacement of above water craft for purposes of protection of trade routes against invaders," ' but withdrew it in preference to acceptance of the phrase 'submarines and above water craft'. [3]

Others also were considering the platform and in Brisbane the QCE under Theodore/AWU control made a considered withdrawal from the isolationist position adopted in reaction to Chanak. cleverly wording a resolution designed if accepted to permit even greater discretion over foreign relations for the FPLP leadership by a declaration that 'Australia is not to be committed to military action in any circumstances by any authority whatsoever without the express approval of parliament and, except in cases of emergency and where time permits, by a referendum of the people'. [4] This was placed on the agenda paper, together with requests from Victoria for a review of defence policy and a South Australian call for 'cultivation of an international sentiment and the linking up industrially and politically with the working class of other countries'. Resurrection of the 1921

[1] Ibid. 23 July, 1924, p.2368; also FPLP Report 1925 session, Report ALP Federal conference 1927 p.35; this was consistent with the prewar attitude to naval building. R. Gollan, Radical and Working Class Politics Melbourne 1960, p.201.

[2] FPLP 17 July, 1924.

[3] Ibid. 31 July, 1924.

[4] QCE Minutes 18 July, 1924.

TUC scheme had also found favor with the Western Australian state executive, it submitted a proposal that the ALP 'convene a Pan-Pacific Congress in Japan to promote a closer understanding of the Labor movements concerned.' [1] There had been some encouragement of the Pan-Pacific idea in the Labor movement by radicals, [2] but insufficient to compel the several state executives to sponsor the item against their own volition - by way of contrast the NSW party, where Sydney Labor Council's affiliation to the Moscow-based Red International of Labor Unions since 1922 had afforded the Australian union movement its closest formal links with the international working class movement, submitted no defence or foreign policy items for conference and was currently preoccupied with the conduct of internecine warfare. Specific proposals for changes in the defence plank and ALP foreign policy were deriving wholly from the FPLP and state executives on their own initiative, in distinction to the attempts at exerting radical influence upon the party through several separate avenues employed during the 1916 - 21 years of militancy.

Federal conference met at Melbourne in late October, 1924 and on the third day Theodore introduced the Queensland resolution, explaining that it was a carefully considered one designed not to cramp the party, acting as a check upon participation in capitalist wars but leaving the way open for defence of vital issues such as white Australia. Against him were arrayed the isolationists led by Blackburn in support of an amendment, 'That Australia shall not, under any circumstances, be committed to military action, except for the defence of Australian soil or Australian territory'. Blackburn argued that even the check of public opinion was of no value if war hysteria prevailed; he wished to prevent anyone being empowered to commit Australia to overseas wars and debate turned on whether or not Japan was seen as a threat or bogey, whether Australia could be defended from her beaches or if it was necessary to fight beyond them. Blackburn's amendment was easily defeated by 22-14, but the best Theodore's motion could achieve was an even split 18 - 18. Queensland and Tasmanian delegates voted solidly for it as instructed. W.A. had been instructed to support 'disarmament and the abolition of war' and

[1] W.A. state executive correspondence file 172, Agenda - Federal, 1924.

[2] Such as R.S. Ross, Labor Call, 17 April, 1924.

voted against while the other states split, four of Blackburn's fellow Victorians deserting him but only one each from S.A. and NSW supporting to produce the tie. It was an issue which went to the heart of Labor beliefs, politicians being as divided as unionists; seven FPLP members were delegates, of whom four supported the Queensland motion and three opposed. [1] Nevertheless the strict isolationist approach had been comfortably defeated and ALP policy on future overseas involvements remained what it had been since 1919, subject to satisfaction of the ambiguous requirement for a 'decision of the people'.

In opposing conscription the conference remained as solid as ever, agreeing to a Victorian suggestion that Labor seek a constitutional prohibition of compulsory service overseas, but went on to greatly strengthen the defence plank after a full afternoon's discussion in committee so as to avoid exploitation by a hostile press of party disagreements on the subject. No record of the deliberations remains and when normal session was resumed any conflict had been submerged. Blackburn and Blakeley, who had voted against the Theodore motion, moved adoption of the report giving the FPLP all it had asked for:

- (1) Adequate home defence against possible foreign aggression.
- (2) Convertible factories for small arms, munitions, aeroplanes.
- (3) Air forces, depots, etc.
- (4) Land forces, fortifications, etc.
- (5) Submarines and adequate above-water craft, and mines.
- (6) Utilisation of Bureau of Science and Industry for the purpose of standardisation of railway and motor rolling stock, and materials.
- (7) Roads and railways. [2]

[1] In favor - Senator Hannan VIC., Senator O'Keefe TAS. J.M. Gabb S.A. and J.McNeill VIC. Against - A. Blakeley NSW, G.E. Yates S.A. and Senator Needham W.A. Report ALP federal conference 1924, p.41.

[2] Ibid. p.42.

The report was adopted and added to the ALP defence plank, making this a now extraordinary item containing no fewer than nine clauses and thirteen sub-sections which together would permit the federal caucus to support virtually any mixture of armed forces it felt necessary, with strong emphasis on domestic self-sufficiency in defence production. Once again the FPLP could be seen to be writing its own policy for conference endorsement and was restricted by the platform only in the use of such forces, not at the dictation of the extra-parliamentary wing but because federal caucus itself remained divided on the circumstances under which an ALP government could act. Such circumstances could only be expressed in terms of hypothetical situations, so Labor remained hampered by the ambiguity inherent in its position.

By reviving the TUC plan of 1921 to organise international links with working class movements in Pacific countries, federal conference reopened the way for further pursuit of the trade union ideal of a guarantee against war based neither upon alliance with a particular country nor trust in the League of Nations. As a first step, an anti-war declaration was adopted urging the Australian movement to 'join with the workers of all countries in striving whole-heartedly for peace by international action, [1] and was followed up by the Western Australians with their own item for a Pan-Pacific Conference, which was carried unanimously. [2] In contrast to the three years of disregard since 1921 a genuine effort was made by a more vigorous federal executive on this occasion to implement the scheme. Six months after federal conference enthusiasts in the Victorian party pressed the issue at state conference. E.J. Holloway warned that, after meeting Japanese union delegates at the ILO meeting at Geneva, he had been made aware of the difficulties involved but felt that the idea

[1] Ibid. p.58. This was an adaptation with several deletions of a Melbourne THC resolution framed for submission to federal conference and circulated to other union organisations. Melbourne THC Minutes 10, 24, 31 July, 16 August, 1924. E.J. Holloway, Secretary THC, to Labor Organisations UTLC Minutes 29 August, 1924.

[2] Report ALP federal conference 1924 p.69.

was worth a try and federal executive was duly requested to initiate action. [1] At an interstate meeting of major TLCs in Adelaide on 8 June further strength was added by an endorsement of the Victorian resolution, [2] and in Sydney on 3 September, 1925 federal executive agreed to issue invitations to a Pan-Pacific Conference in Honolulu in November, 1926. After reports that earlier enquiries abroad had been discouraging it was resolved to accept Institute of Pacific Relations assistance in soliciting participation by peace and other interested bodies. [3] Once actual organisation had been taken in hand Labor bodies in Australia favorably responded early in the new year despite the estimated 100 expense for each state representative. However the overseas response was disappointing again and by 1 July, 1926 federal executive informed Labor organisations of the postponement of the event by eight months, [4] but there was no subsequent improvement. McNamara's own statement to Victorian state conference was described as

a story of endeavour and energy frustrated by misunderstanding or indifference. Tremendous efforts had been made to secure co-operation in all countries whose shores touch the Pacific Ocean but for one reason or another communication in cases had not been established, while in other cases non-participation had been ordained. [5]

At federal conference in 1927 this complete failure was raised by Western Australia; Victoria requested that efforts be pursued for a new date in 1929 but the chairman defended what had been done by McNamara's diligence and after the latter explained the

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- [1] Labor Call 23 April, 1925.
 - [2] Report A.H. Panton MLA, W.A. state executive correspondence file 268, Reports - state executive.
 - [3] Minutes ALP federal executive 2 - 3 September, 1925. Ibid. file 217, Federal executive.
 - [4] E.H. Barker W.A. state secretary - D.L. McNamara, federal secretary 2 February, 1926. ibid; Queensland TLC Minutes 24 February, 19 March, 1926; Minutes UTLC 11 February, 9 April, 1926. Minutes Melbourne THC 25 March, 1926. Minutes Tasmanian state executive 19 November, 1926; Queensland state executive remained unenthusiastic Minutes QCE 17 September, 1926.
 - [5] Circular re proposed Pan-Pacific Conference 1 July 1926 W.A. state executive correspondence, file 217, Federal executive; Report federal executive 1925-6-7, Report ALP federal conference 1927 pp.32-4.

paucity of interest the whole question was referred back to the executive. [1] As far as the ALP was concerned it was content to let the matter rest, only to see it resurrected yet again by enthusiastic trade unions through the new channel of the long-awaited federal industrial organisation - the ACTU, [2] whose executive affiliated with the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat at the urging largely of Garden. [3] The Secretariat had been established in China initially by the Red International of Labor Unions and the communist association, coupled with its multi-racial nature and stated objective of breaking down racial prejudice, augured poorly for support from Australian unions and Labor parties. From the start the AWU refused to associate with it out of antagonism to the ACTU itself and also the 'pernicious doctrines and piebald principles' of the Secretariat. [4] Scullin immediately disowned the connection on behalf of the ALP, [5] but it was still exploited by the government at the 1928 federal election. [6] State parties and other unions joined the chorus and after concerted moves by federal and state Labor parliamentarians, [7] the ACTU split hopelessly over continuation of its affiliation at its 1930 congress, almost wholly upon white Australia grounds.

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- [1] Report ALP federal conference, 1927, p.27
 - [2] Official Report of All-Australian Trade Union Congress 3-9 May, 1927. Barker papers Box 31, items 1-26, Trade union papers.
 - [3] Minutes executive meeting ACTU. Melbourne 8-13 August, 1927. W.A. state executive correspondence, file 290 ACTU
 - [4] E. Grayndler, General secretary, AWU executive council - C. Crofts, secretary ACTU 29 June, 1928 and Henry Boote A.W. 4 July, 1928. Reprinted with mass distribution as a dodger ibid. file 293 Miscellaneous A. See also What is the PPTUS? Sydney, 1928.
 - [5] SMH 27 July, 1928.
 - [6] Nationalist party pamphlets, Ross papers NLA MS 3222 JAF 56/2 Commonwealth Elections, 1928; disclaimers by ALP federal campaign, director E.G. Theodore Westralian Worker 31 August, 1928.
 - [7] SMH 3 January, 1930.

For the ALP the Pan-Pacific Conference episode had always been a secondary matter after initial approval of the principle in 1921 as a harmless concession to union susceptibilities. Even though an honest attempt to convene such a body had been made by the federal executive on behalf of the ALP, only after persistent urging, the objects to be realised were always vague though directed single-mindedly at preventing war in the Pacific. Had more favorable responses been elicited there seems to be little doubt that the racial issue would have inhibited much more than the most cautious of links being established. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the ALP leaders tolerated the scheme and formal party commitment to it only so long as it remained a relatively harmless diversion and repudiated it with alacrity once the unions concerned attempted themselves to bring it to fruition along undesirable lines. Nevertheless, the Pan-Pacific Conference attained significant support not only from unions and TLCs but state parties as well throughout the twenties. [1] This longevity testifies to the deep-seated response to the concept in the Labor movement, stemming from the pre-war Second International example and persisting for many years before given its most substantial incarnation by radical supporters of the RILU. Although an application of a European idea to the Pacific region, which proved completely abortive in a practice, the Pan-Pacific concept in Australia during the twenties must be considered before any easy dismissal of Australian unions as isolationist: for a large, indeed considerable number, working class internationalism formed but the obverse to Anglo-Australian imperialism.

Although decidedly unsuccessful either in urging internationalism or encouraging the embedded isolationism in the party, as an alternative to the ALP foreign policy given birth in 1918, and nurtured by the foreign crises threatening Australian tranquillity from 1922 - 1927, the disparate elements in the industrial wing were powerful enough nevertheless to check FPLP liberty exemplified in the 1924 defence plank. The scope permitted federal caucus by this part of the platform grated on many in the movement as inconsistent with

[1] It was raised yet again at ALP federal conference in 1930, on this occasion to be firmly turned down. Report ALP federal conference, 1930 pp. 53-6.

Labor's professed anti-militarism and support for disarmament, leading to immediate protests in every state. R.S. Ross bitterly denounced the new plank as 'window-dressing for the elections ... permitting almost anything in the way of preparedness for war', [1] and similar protests were reflected by items appearing on Victorian state conference agenda. [2] Melbourne THC resolved to urge state executive to call a special federal conference to reconsider the defence plank [3], supported by the UTLC in Adelaide [4], Brisbane TLC [5] and Hobart, [6] Federal executive turned down the Victorian application, [7] but opinion in this state was so strong that after a defence policy committee at state conference in 1926 failed to reach a conclusion, it was instructed to prepare a report for the next year. [8] Consisting of J.H. Scullin, Jean Daley, R.S. Ross, R.A. Crouch and three others, the committee came to accord in the intervening twelve months on a recommendation for deletion of clauses 2 - 7, (the FPLP additions of 1924) and other minor alterations, but reported disagreement over knocking out clause 1: 'Adequate home defence against possible foreign aggression'. Scullin, McNeill and even Brennan spoke for retention of this last provision at 1927 state conference, claiming that it was an inoffensive and justifiable declaration, and succeeded in carrying delegates with them by 111 - 52. Several amendments

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- [1] Westralian Worker 28 November, 1924; also Jean Daley, 'Labor's Defence Policy' Labor Call 2 April, 1925; R.A. Crouch, Victorian state president, ibid. 22 January, 1925 and succeeding issues.
 - [2] Ibid. 19 March, 1925.
 - [3] Minutes 23, 30 April, 7 May, 1925.
 - [4] Minutes UTLC 12 May, 1925.
 - [5] Minutes TLC executive 29 May; ibid. Council 3 June, 1925.
 - [6] But rejected by Tasmanian state executive, Minutes 10 July, 1925 and Western Australian state executive in May-June, upheld by state congress Report W.A. Labor congress pp. 120-22.
 - [7] Minutes ALP federal executive 3 September, 1925. W.A. state executive correspondence, file 217, federal executive.

suggesting an isolationist resolution for the platform were defeated before conference ran out of time but the Call interpreted the result as indicating substantial support for the existing plank. [1]

1927 federal conference was held at Canberra during May, to coincide with the royal opening of the new federal capital, an arrangement criticised by W.A. because of the short notice afforded and inevitable distractions. John Curtin, particularly, had taken conference seriously and circulated a memo to other states criticising lacunae in the ALP platform; as a result of his influence the W.A. party sent requests, inter alia,

1. That the federal Labor conference declares the foreign policy of the ALP in respect to international relations as a whole; the League of Nations, the Washington Naval Pact, peace in the Pacific Ocean; Japan and China.
2. That the conference declares the policy respecting the relations of the Commonwealth to the British Empire, Imperial Conferences, fiscal relations within the Empire, relationship of Australia to Imperial defence, migration and Australian mandates. [2]

However Curtin was to be disappointed by the work of conference, which was bogged down for the first few days over yet another manifestation of disunity in NSW. On 14 May conference selected FPLP members Scullin, Brennan and Needham to form a foreign policy committee with J. J. Kenneally, H. Kneebone and J. S. Collings and when it reported back Scullin himself successfully moved a recommendation that the first W.A. item be discharged, 'as it is impossible with limited time to go into the many and far-reaching questions raised.' [3] Instead, the delegates contented themselves with a reaffirmation of the existing

[1] Ibid. 28 April, 5 May, 1927.

[2] Memo to state executive 19 March, 1926 W.A. state executive correspondence file 268, Reports - state executive; Minutes W.A. state executive 21 February 1927.

[3] Report ALP federal conference, 1927 p. 27.

specification of 'Complete self-government for Australia as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations'[1] and opted for the status quo by even-handedly making an indirect attack upon Britain, condemning 'the aggressive naval and military intervention in China of powers foreign to that country'.

A similar method of handling the defence plank was employed, with establishment of a committee of moderate composition: Brennan and Senator Graham, with Blackburn, J.S. Collings, ex-Senator Gardiner and Kneebone. Their report was adopted without opposition from conference and, in deference to the persistent union discontent, resulted in a dramatic pruning of the overloaded plank inherited from 1918 and 1924 conferences. Most of the superfluous detail and explicit commitments approved in 1924 were removed and the plank reduced to general principles and a minimum of particulars:

Defence plank, 1927

1. Adequate home defence against possible foreign aggression.
2. That the Commonwealth Constitution be amended to include a condition that no Australian can be conscripted for military service.
3. Amendment of Defence Act to secure -
 - (a) Deletion of all clauses relating to compulsory training and service.
 - (b) Any sentence imposed by court martial to be subject to review by a civil court.
 - (c) No offence to be created by regulation; no penalty to be imposed by regulation.
 - (d) No employment of or interference by soldiers in industrial disputes.
 - (e) No raising of forces for service outside the Commonwealth, or participation or promise of participation in any future overseas war, except by decision of the people. [2]

[1] Clause 2(a), Fighting Platform, ibid.

[2] Ibid. pp. 26-7.

By and large the 1927 federal conference marked the return to an uneasy balance in the Labor party; the explicit clauses of the defence plank adopted as direct inputs from the FPLP had been struck out and the plank greatly simplified: at the same time the internationalist proposal had been given a run before abandonment by the ALP, and isolationism rejected in favor of retention of the qualification upon future involvements overseas in force since 1918. Having entertained, then rejected the separate notions of isolationism and internationalism as federal policy the British connection was accepted, if only by default and with caution bred of the knowledge that no platform clause or conference declaration could be made 'villain-proof' [1] amidst the unpredictabilities of the real world. It was not a case of politicians subverting the idealism or inherent isolationism of the party rank and file, but acceptance for better or worse of a great and powerful protector as the only guarantee of security, introducing problems of alliance management which were genuinely intractable and capable of even temporary resolution only as changing time and circumstance permitted. As John Curtin pointed out to state executive of the Western Australian party, failure to make precise declarations of policy vis à vis the League, China, Japan and other issues and the reposing of guarded confidence in the British Commonwealth, left future Labor attitudes imprecise and open ended. [2] W.A. moved at the next federal executive meeting that another federal conference be held especially to revise the federal platform further, but failed to obtain support. [3] This sort of precision in defining complex relationships in a document such as the federal platform, even if reasonable agreement could be obtained, was inherently unlikely and Curtin probably failed then to appreciate the benefits of calculated ambiguity in such matters to the federal leaders.

This circumspection and the holding of the line against both isolationist and working class-international pressures gave the Scullin government freedom of manoeuvre upon taking office in October, 1929 - the first federal Labor government since the conscription split thirteen

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- [1] J.M. Gabb MHR used the term in the foreign policy debate in 1924. Report ALP federal conference, 1924.p.40
 - [2] W.A. state executive Minutes 18 July, 1927; editorial Westralian Worker 17 June, 1927.
 - [3] W.A. state executive correspondence file 321, Federal executive.

years previously. Almost immediately a long-standing Labor objective was realised by the abolition of the compulsory military training scheme which had functioned in a much reduced and inefficient manner throughout the twenties. It was accomplished by administrative regulation within days of taking office and without consulting the Defence Department, [1] but left the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act untouched. If any major departures were expected on the basis of Labor's platform or statements when in opposition, such fears were removed by Labor's record in office. Within months of reaching the Treasury benches it fell to a senior Labor minister J.E. Fenton to represent Australia at the London Conference on Naval Disarmament in January 1930. At those proceedings Australia cooperated closely with the other members of the Commonwealth in formulating a common British view prior to the plenary sessions, at which the Commonwealth naval forces were taken as a single unit for the purposes of negotiation. Fenton spoke up forcefully on Australia's behalf in support of the blue water strategy, admitting that he was seen by the press at the conference 'as one of the exceptionally big navy men' and accepting the eventual outcome on the basis of British Admiralty advice as to its adequacy for Australian needs. [2] Continued acceptance of Australian identification with the R.N. in defence planning, endorsed by leader of the opposition J.G. Latham, was subject only to Labor's insistence on maintaining independence of judgement on future involvements:

I stated that we were not prepared to give guarantees involving us in possible European entanglements. That was the attitude I took up during the committee discussions and I would have taken the same stand in open conference if necessary. [3]

[1] CPD 122.6 December, 1929 pp. 844-6.

[2] CPD 126.30 July, pp. 4935-40.

[3] Ibid. p. 4939

Labor did little more than exploit the definition of Commonwealth membership provided in the Balfour Declaration in 1924 as 'autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though freely united in common allegiance to the Crown as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.' [1]

Labor's federal conference in May, 1930 declined the opportunity to consider 'defence, war and peace' in depth and easily headed off the Pan-Pacific conference enthusiasts with an innocuous resolution in favor of world disarmament. [2] To deprive the RILU and the Communist Pan-Pacific Secretariat of their appeal to internationalist sentiment it was decided to investigate affiliation with the Amsterdam Second International, [3] but, as with all previous such initiatives, nothing practical eventuated. This left Scullin and Brennan free of constraints when both attended the Imperial Conference in September that year, addressing the disarmament committee of the League of Nations at Geneva en route where Brennan especially gave full play to his pacifist enthusiasm. More to the point, however, was the outcome of the Imperial Conference. No plenary session was held on defence and foreign affairs (the only such conference thus affected) though a special sub-committee was convened on Singapore. Despite Labor opposition to the plan since the mid-twenties it was decided that the ultimate completion of the defended naval base at Singapore would be pursued, Scullin being quite cheerful in endorsing a five year moratorium on new works to permit stabilisation of the international situation. [4] It was clear from these decisions, made when the full force of the Depression had yet to break upon the Labor government, that the ALP in office was little inclined to diverge to any significant extent from the policy of its opponents.

[1] R. York Hedges, 'Australia and the Imperial Conference'. A.Q. 9, 1 March, 1937 pp. 80-82.

[2] Report ALP federal conference 1930, pp. 53-6.

[3] Ibid. p. 78.

[4] Round Table 21 December, 1930 pp. 252-3; J.M. McCarthy, 'Singapore and Australian Defence 1921-1942'. A.O. 25, 2 August, 1971 pp. 165-80 and 'The ALP and the Armed Services: Theory and Practice'. L.H. 25 November, 1973 pp. 58-67.

Conclusions

ALP defence and foreign policies prior to the First World War were formed by the federal leadership of the party on the basis of the perceived political needs of the day. The party's federal consultative structure was used virtually to ratify the policies so formed on military and naval defence, within an implicitly accepted framework of Imperial co-operation with Great Britain. The Labor movement appeared happy with the procedure thus established and the policies devised. Little by way of protest was encountered as successive prewar Labor governments implemented the party platform clauses, which were of necessity highly generalised and greatest opposition to them came in fact from the ranks of the FPLP itself. By the outbreak of the war, resentments at certain aspects of Defence Act administration had given rise to party agitation, bearing fruit at federal level in demands for reform of some military practices and clarification of the implications of the universal trainee-based army for home defence. There was no discernible challenge to the unstated position of Australia vis a vis Great Britain. On the first matter, such opposition as did exist took the form chiefly of popular resistance to the onerous demands upon eligible youths and found organised shape in the creation of quite small groups of pacifist or Marxist persuasion without much direct influence on the Labor parties. This period marked the peak of an FPLP ascendancy that was not to survive the middle years of the war.

Initiatives for alternative policies came from left-wing parties and sects and other attitude groups on the fringes of political Labor, most seeking influence on trade unions and, through the trade union movement, upon the Labor parties themselves. Organisational connections between unions and parties varied in range from the TLCs, with their relatively strict industrial focus, to the vast, oligarchic AWU dissatisfied with Labor governments' performances and structural considerations, together with other, smaller unions with radical leaderships. Under normal circumstances the only direct trade union access to Labor party decision-making lay through affiliation strength. To be effective, this had to be closely organised and deployed in support of highly specific objectives, as was best illustrated at the time of the conscription crisis. Nearly all Labor political leaders favored conscription to some extent, making it very much an industrialist vs.

politicians dispute. At the federal level, Hughes' determination and his advantages as FPLP leader and Prime Minister were sufficient to cower the membership into acceptance of a formula that effectively transferred the responsibility for the decision to the general public but seemed to offer the highest likelihood of successfully imposing compulsory military service. Holman in New South Wales, Vaughan in South Australia and Scaddan in Western Australia left their parties after defeat on conscription, taking substantial numbers of their parliamentary colleagues and varying proportions of the movement with them. In Tasmania Earle left after the great majority of the PLP rallied behind the anti-conscriptionist challenger, Lyons. Victorian leader Elmslie supported conscription, but was permitted to remain on the condition that he maintain a neutral stance throughout the campaign, while the new Ryan government in Queensland was unwilling to sacrifice the hard-won advantages of office to support what seemed increasingly to be a perverse, incorrectly-based policy. Ryan emerged as the main challenger to conscription purely on the grounds of the faulty reasoning of its proponents.

Expulsion of the conscriptionists was a development independent of struggles for control in most of the parties involved. Structural conflict in Victoria, the first state to declare its intention of enforcing its policy, was noticeably weak and in NSW the industrial section/politicians clash had already been substantially settled, if not finally resolved, earlier in the year. In Queensland and Tasmania, where there were no organised challenges (as distinct from minority discontent) to the established power balances from below, expulsions were enforced with alacrity. Only in South Australia was the issue of support for conscription actually used as a weapon by one faction against the dominant one to upset the leadership. Every effort was made in Western Australia to conciliate the conscriptionists up until the last: the split in that state was forced by federal events.

Structural conflict in NSW and South Australia preceded the outbreak of war in origin, being induced by the disappointments of Labor in office and exacerbated by wartime conditions and by under-representation of important elements in the parties. Only in the former case did these conditions lead to a long-term effect, for in South Australia the issue was resolved once the challenging group attained its objectives. The

NSW result differed because of fundamental disparities between the respective states, affecting the nature and style of factional behaviour. In every state, except Tasmania and Western Australia, there were organised left-wing groups and party factions within the Labor movement, persistently advancing radical policy alternatives on conscription, recruiting and support for the war itself. These were limited in their effectiveness by several factors, including the size and diversity of the workforce sustaining the local Labor movement, the tactical approach of the groups as measured by readiness to agitate directly within the movement to gain influence in the party, or to eschew party involvement altogether in favor of other forms of political activity. Chances for success of these groups rested additionally upon the attitude of the Labor leadership to group activity and that leadership's determination and capacity to prevent such activity.

More specifically, at one extreme can be identified such examples as the IWW, unconcerned with political success in the established system and related thereby to those other parties who saw their role as being to compete against the Labor party directly - the Australian Socialist and Socialist Labor parties for example. Being opposed by the Labor party leaderships for obvious reasons and unable to secure mass adherence, these bodies nevertheless contributed indirectly by helping to set the terms of debate and outline the alternatives to accepted or unchallenged policies. Next can be placed those groups and parties concerned to exert direct influence as sympathetic but conscious vanguard elements in the parties, leading but not outpacing them. The Australian Freedom League, Australian Peace Alliance, Victorian Socialist party and their imitators, or ad hoc groups such as the Wage Earners in the Victorian Labor party can be cited here. This role was particularly subject to the sensitivities of Labor leaderships to any threat against their positions and most often raised antagonisms in direct proportion to their initial successes. The third category comprised such factions as the NSW industrial section, later Industrial Vigilance Council, its South Australian counterpart and the Militant Propagandists and Catholic Workers' Association in Victoria. In the first two cases, success was achieved in actually taking over the party in the face of spirited resistance by the parliamentary leadership;

in Victoria an attempt to supplant at least a portion of the leadership by means of a conference ticket selected by the Militants failed because the ruling group was sufficiently broadly based to retain the confidence of the majority. The Catholic workers strictly limited themselves in scope of action and did not sustain as an organised faction. Tasmania experienced conditions apparently ideally suited to inciting a threat to the leadership, but the opportunity was not exploited, due largely to the underdeveloped state of unionism and its incapacity to maintain such an effort. Western Australia shared the same historical and socio-economic disabilities as Tasmania, although the latter was doubly inhibited in regard to conditions for an insurrection by the presence of a radical-sounding and apparently sympathetic leader who took over the party without need of prompting. Despite the familiarity of the NSW experience then, it should be emphasised just how exceptional this particular case proved to be.

Success by the industrialists in South Australia resulted in the accession to power of a moderate union elite, principally led by the AWU branch; hereafter the S.A. party remained relatively untouched by radical policies on the war and was the most conservative Labor party at the end of 1918. By contrast, there existed in NSW a diversity of elements involved in the insurrection, running from the AWU and the more radically inclined Miners' Federation to the left-wing branches and unions, who all found common cause against Holman. Once the victory was won two critically important developments occurred: the decision, firstly, to maintain the industrial section after the split in late 1916, due to an institutionalised suspicion of politicians as a class rather than merely one particular group of them. At the 1917 state conference the unsuccessful proposals for card vote representation and exclusion of politicians from state executive in the previous year were at last carried and the continuance of a special organisation of industrialists affirmed. Secondly, there was a transfer of leading unionists from the original section to places on the state executive and, later, to state and federal seats made available by the conscription purge. Quite accidentally, important leaders like Sam Rosa and John Power missed out in the scramble for office and were left in control of the Industrial Vigilance Council, making the most of their opportunities to maximise this position of irresponsible power - that is, without the constraints imposed on the new

leaders attempting to run the party and to increase its parliamentary representation, aims which naturally conduced to adoption of more moderate attitudes and policies. By the time the implications of this situation had been realised, the radical war and recruiting policies contrived by the IVC were unstoppable.

Victory by the socialist left in the Sydney Labor Council at the same time demonstrated the rank and file support for this radical shift, but the organised unions there were not well placed to readily urge their similar attitudes upon the party: in any case the ideological disposition of key leaders like Judd prejudiced many of them against Labor political activity. Even the Brisbane Industrial Council and Melbourne THC, also quite radical at the time, were unable to significantly affect their respective state parties to anything approaching a similar extent, as unions in those states were relatively well integrated and without an independent channel into the party. Even so, it must be stressed that the radicals in the IVC and their counterparts elsewhere were restricted to those issues upon which they could summon mass support through their genuine popularity and were not capable of imposing policies at will upon political Labor.

Once the NSW war and recruiting policies reached the federal level the major difficulties involved in inducing change within a confederal party were encountered. Despite wide rank and file Labor disillusionment with the war effort to date, exemplified by reactions to the Governor-General's recruiting conference, and a distinct lack of leadership from the federal leaders, amongst whom FPLP secretary Catts was responsible for the most positive declarations, the proposals were defeated in outright form even after their moderation at NSW state conference. Reception of the policies turned upon the responses of individual delegates and the need for solidarity perceived by all, producing the extremely narrow result in favor of a compromise. The diplomacy of T.J. Ryan, secure in his record as Labor premier and the ability to match Hughes in public debate, and the well defined policies of Catts saved the day for the federal leadership. Only two votes prevented adoption of the radical position of opposing further participation in the war; by contrast, ALP endorsement of the generalised and largely impracticable Peace Alliance-influenced plank with little

controversy indicated the extent to which that organisation had been forced to attenuate the substance of its objectives in return for gaining support through the indirect method.

As with the rest of the nation, the Labor movement estimated Australian national requirements in terms of its own domestically defined interests and acted during the war accordingly. In addition to purely material concerns, such as the personal cost of conscription and economic unrest bred by inflation, there was the opinion that the reasons for the war were less idealistic than had been proclaimed, reinforced by British treatment of Ireland, and that the results of overseas service would be the erosion of domestic standards and introduction of cheap colored labor. This last fear combined with misgivings over the intentions of Japan from 1916, culminating in a state approaching panic two years later. Because of the suppression of public debate upon this subject it is difficult to trace it accurately, but fears were strongest at high levels in the FPLP, which alone had access to relevant information, and were transmitted to union leaders and into the mass audiences, where a responsive chord was struck; it was a case of federal party concern meeting popular misgivings. Without this apprehension towards Japan within the FPLP and its strong influence on the rest of the Labor movement by the end of the war, opposition to the continued participation in the conflict in Europe and to abandonment of compulsory military training in the Labor defence plank would have been far less determined and successful than was the case. While the rank and file had trenchant reasons for discontent with the war it was not solely a one-way process of this feeding into federal policy-making considerations. Fear of Japan at the highest parliamentary and trade union levels augmented and shaped ALP disagreement with Australia's continued, single-minded concentration upon sustaining the AIF in Europe.

From the first year of peace the basic divisions and trends of Labor thinking in the nineteen-twenties were apparent and found concise expression as early as the 1919 federal conference. Labor defence policy, established for a decade as reliance upon a compulsorily-trained citizen army and a navy closely locked into the British naval strategy, was reversed with the decision to dispute the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act and emergence of the submarines and aircraft argument as a substitute for closer Imperial partnership. Isolationist and working

class international enthusiasm was also in evidence from this time. With the end of the war came changes in the channels of influence in the ALP as well, during the years of continuing militancy from 1919-21. Breakup of the IVC in NSW removed a potent source of radical inputs and henceforth the factions in that state were principally occupied fighting each other. When rank and file discontent attained a postwar peak, it was the ALP federal leadership itself which actively solicited industrialist opinion, and gave the opportunity for all unions to meet on a national basis with guaranteed access to the highest federal party councils. Accepted by these unions as a minor corollary to socialisation and the OBU was the proposal for the Pan-Pacific Conference, adopted at the 1921 ALP federal conference with much the same reservations as accompanied qualified approval of the socialisation plank - and with as much effect. No follow-up could be carried out at that stage because of consistent failure to establish a permanent national union structure of the type which was only tentatively and unsatisfactorily achieved by 1927.

Once the stimulus provided by the war had been removed there was an unmistakeable reassertion of FPLP dominance in ALP defence and foreign policy formulation. The Pan-Pacific Conference initiative was strongly supported from below, being raised at every federal conference from 1921 to 1930, winning its most favorable reception during 1924-6. When it broke down in execution and left-wing unions began promotion of it through the newly formed ACTU in the shape of the Communist Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, ALP leaders were quick to disown it altogether. After temporarily toying with isolationism in the aftermath of Chanak and its minor sequels during the rest of the decade, the FPLP leaders were forced to attempt to come to terms with the British Commonwealth connection, and it was eventually substantially accepted subject to a necessarily vaguely-worded but deeply felt reservation on too close and uncritical a relationship with Great Britain. That the party leadership never seriously contemplated going beyond this was born out by its essay at national government from 1929: assessment of Labor policy based upon statements while in opposition is risky, due to the over-emphasis of their reactive nature; certainly there was nothing in the ALP platform suggesting any dramatic departures once the Pan-Pacific idea was firmly given its quietus. FPLP dominance on defence was underlined by the acceptance of its recommendations by federal delegates in 1924, although

rejection of these highly explicit but extremely broad-ranging provisions three years later served as a reminder of how deeply anti-militarist and pacifist principles had been accepted in the Labor movement. Caucus discretion in the practical application of platform principles remained unchanged, enabling Labor to make little real deviation from established defence planning giving primacy to naval co-operation with Great Britain once the party had regained office. Even abolition of compulsory military training, such as it was by the end of the twenties, marked a disagreement over fundamentals between Labor and its opponents which was more apparent than real.

Throughout this study policy has been defined as the federal platform provisions on defence and foreign relations, together with what federal Labor leaders enlarged on or attempted to implement from this basis. Main conflict was fought out between forces in the state parties attempting to obtain revisions of policy, and the FPLP leadership, charged with the responsibility for presenting it to the electors, seeking to minimise radical departures. No simple trade union vs. parliamentary party dichotomy is apparent in this process, but there was no doubt that the predominant voice belonged initially to the latter. Three particular challenges to FPLP independence were thrown out concerning these areas of traditionally federal concern during this era; over conscription in 1916 when the party held office; the war and recruiting in 1918; and the internationalist/isolationist dispute, during 1924-27 particularly. Each was sustained by conditions of mass support within substantial portions of the principle state parties for the changes being advocated by influential elites, in direct opposition to the moderation and electorally-conscious policies of the ALP leaders. Under exceptional circumstances, involving a grave challenge to deeply assimilated attitudes in the Labor movement, the ALP leaders were repudiated in 1916, then sorely tried in 1918, but within a decade of the disastrous split the autonomy of the FPLP was in a large measure restored.

Appendices

1. Resolution on Recruiting adopted by Sydney Labor Council
30 May, 1918.
2. Peace proposals devised by a joint meeting of the NSW state
executive and the NSW Industrial Vigilance Council.
Distributed as a 'Circular. State of NSW Annual conference, 1918.'
3. Australian Peace Alliance. Objects and Platform, 1916.
4. Australian Union of Democratic Control. Platform, 1916-17.
5. ALP peace plank adopted at the 1918 federal conference and based
upon proposals formulated and approved by NSW state conference,
1917.

APPENDIX I.

Resolution on Recruiting, adopted by Sydney Labor Council,

30 May 1918.

'That this council, after careful consideration of the war and the issues involved, and being fully zeized with the momentous nature of such issues, declares:-

[1] That careful consideration should be given to the question pressed by Lords Morley, Brassey, Loreburn (ex-Chancellor of England), Farrer, Beauchamp and Lansdowne, namely, "Is it worth while indefinitely to prolong the awful struggle with its lamentable sacrifice of life and the waste of resources not easily to be replaced?"

[2] That we deeply regret that the Federal Government ignored the peace proposals of the P.L.L. Conference last June, and this Council's endoresement in January last of the preamble of those proposals and demand therefore that the Allied Governments immediately initiate negotiations for peace.

[3] That the secret treaties of the Allied Governments, as published in the press disclosing designs of territorial aggrandisement; the placing of an army of approximately 80,000 armed men in Ireland; the Allied Governments' attitude towards the working class Government in Russia; Mr Hughes' speech before the Manufacturers of this city, in which he thanked God that Germany had plunged the world into this war; and the fact that all anti-Labor forces are in favor of the war and its continuance, justify grave doubts regarding the contention that the Allied Governments are fighting solely for liberty, justice and democracy.

[4] That the Allied Statemen's rejection of Chancellor von Hollweg's peace offer (December 12, 1916), President Wilson's 'Appeal to Belligerents' (December 22, 1916), the Pope's appeal (August 2, 1917), Germany's peace offer (December 25, 1917) and the Allied Government's

refusal of passports to the Labor leaders to attend the Stockholm peace conference (August, 1917), and the failure of the Allied statesmen to initiate peace negotiations enable the German militarists to persuade the German workers that the Allied Governments are more concerned about rendering Germany impotent as a competitor in the world markets than in securing an early and just peace.

[5] That the economic resolutions of the Paris conference, the demand for the annexation of German colonies, the declaration in favor of 'crushing Germany' and other imperialistic utterances of bellicose statesmen and publicists have strengthened and are still strengthening, the German ruling class, and have prolonged and are still prolonging the war.

[6] That as all modern wars are caused by the conflicting interests of different sections of the capitalist class, a 'conclusive' or 'permanent peace' is not possible under capitalism.

[7] That the secret conference of English, French and German financiers in Switzerland last September for the purpose of devising means to control Labor after the war, proves that they place their class interests and the safeguarding of Capitalism above the welfare of suffering humanity.

[8] That the Federal Government's further attempt to introduce conscription and its refusal to grant Mr Foster's passport to Russia have an evil significance-especially when combined with the wholesale suppression of Labor-Socialist literature and free speech, and the censorship, which is far worse than the English censorship.

[9] That the promises of the Nationalist Government at the Recruiting Conference should be carried out as acts of justice: we refuse to accept them as bribes for lives.

[10] That the bleeding of the manhood of the white races to death, thereby forcing many millions of women to endure a life of celibacy and hard and uncongenial work, is a crime against civilization.

[11] That the peoples of the belligerent nations are war-weary and long for peace.

[12] That the greatest service we can render the men at the Front, their loved ones at home, and humanity in general is to do all in our power to stop the war. Therefore, whilst fully expecting anti-Labor forces to misrepresent and calumniate our action, we refuse to take part in any recruiting campaign and call upon the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective Governments to immediately secure an armistice on all Fronts and initiate negotiations for peace.'

Moved at Special Meeting Sydney Labor Council 2 May, 1918 by E.E. Judd, and carried after protracted debate.)

APPENDIX II

Peace proposals of N.S.W. Industrial Section, 1918.

'Circular State of N.S.W. Annual conference, 1918.'

The Defence of Australia.

[1] Australia from her isolated position and the immensity of her area compared to population is unique among the civilised communities of the world. As the one outpost of White Civilisation whose nearest neighbours in enormous numbers are anxious to find more elbow room, we are in grave danger of being swamped out of existence by the mere weight of their numbers, should we allow them free ingress. These Alien Races occupy a much lower stage of economic development than we have attained, and even in small numbers, are a menace to our Standard of Living.

[2] To restrict the influx of these races is vital to Australia's existence as a free community. To maintain these restrictions we must be able to defend ourselves against the aggression of those whose interests are opposed to that policy.

The only reliable defence of Australia must be a local defence. The contention that Australian freedom must for all time depend upon the continued naval supremacy of Great Britain is as false as it is mischievous and cowardly. Our distance from other lands renders the defence of Australia from foreign aggression quite practicable, but none the less, an immediate necessity.

For the adequate defence of Australia we recommend:-

(a) The establishment of an arsenal fully equipped for the manufacture of artillery and all the munitions of War.

(b) The fortification of our Coastal towns and cities.

(c) The construction of a fleet of submarines.

(d) The erection of Aerodromes at suitable points around the Coast line of Australia.

(e) The establishment in Australia of works for the construction of aircraft in large numbers and their utilisation in peace time for the carriage of mails and other useful purposes.

(f) The encouragement of Rifle Clubs.

(g) The military training of our able manhood.

(h) The establishment of all essential industries in Australia

so that in the event of invasion the Commonwealth may be self-contained.

(i) The establishment of such economic and political conditions as will enable the Commonwealth to attract and maintain a large population of free and prosperous White Citizens.

Proposals for discussion re the attitude of the Labor Movement
on War and recruiting.

[1] That a year ago the Labor Party of N.S.W., recognising the appalling loss of life, the destruction of wealth and other evils arising from the present war, adopted proposals which sought to secure peace by negotiations. These proposals, which were endorsed by the Labor movement in every State, were forwarded to Great Britain, America and other English speaking communities and have been generally approved.

[2] Whereas the Government of the Commonwealth has taken no steps to bring these or any other peace proposals before the Imperial Government but, on the contrary, has manifested open hostility to all suggestions for attaining peace and has endeavored to suppress them.

[3] Whereas the Governments of Great Britain, her Allies and the Central Powers seem equally determined to continue this colossal and inhuman conflict as long as the supplies of men are available for further butchery; and as this insane slaughter policy threatens to destroy the roots of our white civilisation which have been slowly garnered during three thousand years of human effort and suffering, we advise the workers here and in other lands to unite for its immediate suppression.

[4] Realising that, whatever the immediate causes of the war have been, that its fundamental origin is economic, and that racial animosities are subsidiary causes fostered and exploited by the military and ruling classes, we are less concerned with apportioning the blame for the outbreak of the conflagration than with the need for its immediate suppression.

[5] The press censorship and general application of despotic powers by the Government have entirely prevented the free discussion of the war and many vital problems therefrom, and no public reply has been possible

to the most outrageous falsehoods or the most mischievous arguments. It therefore becomes then a duty which can be no longer honourably evaded for this party, representing the sentiments of the Australian nation to disregard these unjust and tyrannical restrictions and proclaim its message to the people elsewhere. The present conditions of Russia, Finland and the Ukraine Republic are held up to Australia as shocking examples of what would happen to the whole world if Britain and her Allies consented to peace by negotiation before inflicting a knockout blow upon Germany. Such a contention is absurd. Even assuming the worst stories of German greed and treachery to be true, between the present belligerent powers no such inequality exists as between them and Russia. Our armies remain strong and intact, our munitions and equipment undiminished. If an honourable and equitable peace were agreed on in conference the armies of all the Powers concerned would be gradually and simultaneously demolished, and no nation would be able to dominate or terrorise another. Failing agreement by conference hostilities could be resumed, although such a calamitous contingency would be unlikely.

[6] We contend that the forces making for militaristic continuance of this war are financial and commercial greed, land hunger, ambition and a spurious public opinion, deliberately manufactured and sustained by an unscrupulous press.

[7] It behoves us, therefore, to spare no effort and shirk no risk in order to spread the truth as we know it among those who suffer and perish for lack of knowledge.

[8] Australia occupies a unique position among the communities of the earth today—the largest remaining territory suitable by climatic conditions to sustain the white race and possessing abundant space for its growth. Australia's development is restricted by lack of people to settle and develop her enormous waste spaces. As the lone outpost of white civilisation, Australia is at once the most easily defended great country in the world, and at the same time the one most in need of defence, and the land in which defence has been most scandalously neglected. The danger grows greater day by day, and yet the conspiracy of silence among our rulers and their Press mouthpieces grows more persistent and more ominous, and already any preparations we make will only be just in time to avert disaster.

[9] Nearly 400,00 men have left our shores to take part in the interminable conflict raging in Europe and seemingly no nearer finality now than in 1914. Our government, which measures all Australian interests with the yardstick of the British merchant, contends that Australia's best defence is on the fields of France and Flanders and are frantically urging every able bodied citizen to leave his country for his country's good, and have it made a penal offence for anyone to advise stopping the mad stampede.

[10] We contend that the local defence of Australia is not only practicable but is an immediate and imperative duty, the fulfilment of which is of vital concern to our continued freedom. The mean and cowardly contention that Australian freedom is now and ever must be contingent upon the naval supremacy of Great Britain in the North Sea is as false as it is mischievous. At the outbreak of war our own small navy, derided at its inception by every jingo patriot in the Commonwealth, alone saved our coastal cities from destructive enemy raids, while our seaborne commerce and military transports have been protected by the navy of a foreign ally.

[11] Australia's sparse population has been so greatly depleted by her share in the war, her manufactures neglected and her financial obligations so heavily increased that our very existence is in jeopardy. Taking these facts in conjunction with our Government's refusal to negotiate for peace, this conference therefore declares:-

[a] That the policy of the ALP is opposed to any men in future leaving Australia for military service abroad.

[b] That, failing the consent of the Imperial authorities to at once open up negotiations for peace, the Australian divisions on service abroad be brought back to Australia.

[c] That we call upon the organised workers of every country engaged in the war to take similar action.

APPENDIX III

AUSTRALIAN PEACE ALLIANCE

OBJECTS AND PLATFORM, 1916.

Objects.

[1] To bind together all the forces in Australia that are sympathetic to the establishment and maintenance of peace by means of international organisation, arbitration and other such methods as may be favored.

[2] To create where practicable State Councils in sympathy with the objects of the Alliance.

[3] To cooperate wherever possible with similar organisations in other parts of the world.

[4] To advocate the abolition of all forms of conscription.

[5] To uphold the principle of freedom of speech, and to cooperate with all organisations fighting for liberty of expression.

[6] To advocate the following platform:-

Platform

[a] The establishment of an effective and permanent international arbitration court elected on a democratic basis, including women's delegates.

[b] The setting up of adequate machinery (including enfranchisement of women) for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy.

[c] The general reduction of armaments and the nationalisation of their manufacture.

[d] The organisation of the trade unions and workers associations, with a definite view of ending the war.

[e] The education of children in the principles of peace and arbitration.

[f] The appointment of a Minister for Peace and the appropriation of a considerable sum of public money for the dissemination of peace ideas.

[g] The termination of the present war at the earliest possible moment, and the following principles to govern the terms of peace:-

[i] No province or territory in any part of the world shall be transferred from one Government to another without the consent by plebisite of the population of such province.

[ii] No treaty, arrangement or undertaking involving the nations in armed support of any Powers shall be entered upon in the name Great Britain without the confirmation of a national referendum. Adequate machinery for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy shall be created.

[iii] The foreign policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating Alliances for the purpose of maintaining the Balance of Power but shall be directed to the establishment of a concert of Europe and the setting up of an international council, whose deliberations and decisions shall be public.

[iv] Great Britain shall propose as part of the peace settlement a plan for the drastic reduction of armaments by the consent of all the belligerent powers, and to facilitate that policy shall attempt to secure the general nationalisation of the manufacture of armaments and the prohibition of the export of armaments by one country to another.

[v] The universal abolition of Continental Conscription and compulsory military training.

[vi] No war shall be declared without a national referendum.

APPENDIX IV

Australian Union of Democratic Control. Platform, 1916-17.

Note:

(A branch of the Australian Peace Alliance was founded in Sydney on 30 November 1915. Following disagreements at the federal APA conference in Melbourne at Easter, 1916 the NSW branch broke away to become the Australian Union of Democratic Control (for the Avoidance of War.) on 21 June, 1916. The platform adopted was as set out below. Another change of attitude took place in late 1917 with the result that the AUDC renamed itself Australian Peace Alliance, NSW Council following another interstate conference at Easter, 1918. The AUDC platform's modest scope compared to that of the original Australian Peace Alliance will be apparant, as also will the lack of an explicit commitment to organising in the Labor movement in pursuit of its aims in plank [d] of the APA document.)

AUDC Platform.

- A. The creation of adequate machinery to ensure democratic control of foreign policy and that each British Dominion shall have a voice in the foreign policy of the Empire.
- B. The establishment or development on a proper basis of a Parliament or Council of the Empire which shall have charge or the foreign affairs of the Empire.
- C. That the foreign policy of the British Empire shall be directed to the establishment of a concert of Europe, and the setting up of an International Council or Parliament worldwide in scope whose decisions shall be public.
- D. That until such an International Council or Parliament has been created Britain shall urge upon the powers a resort to the existing Court of Arbitration, or to a Commission of Enquiry or to other means provided by Hague Conventions for the avoidance of war.

- E. That Great Britain shall propose as part of the settlement of the present war a plan for the drastic reduction of armaments by the consent of all the belligerent powers and the abolition of private manufacture and trade in armaments.
- F. That no territory in any part of the world shall be transferred from one government to another without the consent of the population of such territory.
- G. The universal abolition of conscription and compulsory military training.

L.C. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia. London, 1935 p.136.

APPENDIX V

ALP peace plank 1918 federal conference,
based upon NSW state conference proposals, 1917.

PEACE PROPOSALS

That as the Governments of Europe, founded on class rule and adopting the methods of secret diplomacy, have failed utterly to preserve peace, or to bring the present war within measurable distance of a conclusion, and whereas the existing capitalistic system of production for profit compels every nation constantly to seek new markets to exploit, inevitably leading to a periodic clash of rival interests, we contend that only by an organised system of production for use, under democratic control, can a recurrence of such calamities be permanently avoided. The present system, by fostering commercial rivalry, territorial greed and dynastic ambitions, has created an atmosphere of mutual fear and distrust among the great powers, which was the immediate cause of the present colossal struggle.

While the people suffer and die in millions, thousands of the ruling and privileged classes are amassing huge fortunes out of war profits. We are, therefore, convinced that peace can only be accomplished by the united efforts of the workers of all the countries involved.

We, therefore, to quote the "Sydney Morning Herald" of April 18, 1917, "Rejoice over the revolution in Russia" and congratulate the people of that country upon their efforts to abolish despotic power and class privileges.

We are of opinion that a complete military victory by the Allies over the Central European Powers, can only be accomplished by the further sacrifice of human lives, and the creation of an intolerable burden of debt, to the further impoverishment of the workers, who must bear such burdens.

We, therefore, urge that immediate negotiations be initiated for an International Conference, for the purpose of arranging equitable terms of peace, on which conference the working-class organisations shall have adequate representation, and the inclusion of women delegates, and we further urge that the British self-governing Dominions and Ireland shall be granted separate representation thereon.

We submit that, in framing the terms of a lasting peace, the following principles should be observed:-

1. The right of small nations (including Ireland) to political independence.
2. That the European countries occupied by invading armies during the present war be immediately evacuated.
3. That disputed provinces or territories shall choose their own forms of government, or shall be attached to such adjacent countries as the majority of their inhabitants may by plebiscite decide, on the democratic principle that all just government must rest on the consent of the governed. The free exercise of such choice, under conditions of political equality, to be secured by the appointment of an international commission of control.

NOTE:- This course (with such safeguards for the rights of minorities in communities of mixed races as the Conference might devise) would secure a final settlement of the rival claims for Alsace-Lorraine, Poland, Transylvania and other territories similarly circumstanced.

4. That, prior to the disbandment of the combatent armies and the merchant navies employed in the war, they shall be utilised by an organised system of volunteer service for restoring the devastated territories at the expense of the invading powers, which shall also compensate the widows and dependants of all non-combatants, including seamen, who have lost their lives as a result of hostilities.
5. That, where an amicable arrangement cannot be reached by the Peace Conference in regard to captured colonies and dependencies, such territories shall be placed provisionally under international control.
6. That the freedom of the seas be secured on the lines laid down by President Wilson, of America, in his speech at Washington, in May 1916, where he advocated-

"A universal association of the nations to maintain the inviolate security of the highway of the seas for the common and unhindered use of all the nations of the world."

7. The abolition of trading in armaments and the prohibition of the private manufacture thereof.
8. The abolition of conscription in all countries simultaneously.
9. The control of foreign relations under a democratic system, based upon publicity in lieu of the present methods of secret diplomacy.
10. That the existing machinery for International arbitration be expanded to embrace a concert of Europe, ultimately merging into a world-wide Parliament, as advocated by President Wilson in a recent message to the American Congress.

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